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**A N N O T A T I O N S**

**ON**

**THE APOCALYPSE.**

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ANNOTATIONS  
ON  
THE APOCALYPSE.

INTENDED AS A SEQUEL TO THOSE OF

MR. ELSLEY ON THE GOSPELS,

AND OF

MR. PREBENDARY SLADE ON THE EPISTLES ;

AND THUS TO COMPLETE A SERIES OF COMMENTS ON THE  
WHOLE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT,

FOR THE USE OF STUDENTS IN PROPHETICAL SCRIPTURE.

BY JOHN CHAPPEL WOODHOUSE, D.D.

DEAN OF LICHFIELD.



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1828.



TO THE RIGHT REVEREND  
  
WILLIAM,  
  
LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM,  
  
THIS PUBLICATION,  
  
UNDERTAKEN AT HIS LORDSHIP'S SUGGESTION,

IS

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY HIS

LORDSHIP'S OBLIGED, HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.





## GENERAL CONTENTS.

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	Page
PREFACE . . . . .	xiii
The Review of Evidence respecting the authenticity and Divine Inspiration of the Apocalypse . . . . .	3
Of the Occasion and the Intention of this part of the Work . . . . .	3 to 5

### 1. *Of the external Evidence relating to the Apocalypse.*

In what degree the external Evidence is affected by the time when the Apocalypse was written and published	5 — 6
Of the time when it first appeared . . . . .	6 — 11
The testimony of Irenæus . . . . .	11 — 13
———— of Ignatius . . . . .	13 — 16
———— of the Syriac Version . . . . .	16
———— of Hermas and Polycarp . . . . .	16 — 18
———— of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras . . . . .	19
———— of the Epistle from the Gallic Churches . . . . .	19 — 20
———— of Melito, Theophilus, Appollonius, and Clemens of Alexandria . . . . .	20 — 21
———— of Tertullian . . . . .	21 — 22
———— of certain Heretics in those times . . . . .	23 — 24
———— of Hippolitus and Origen . . . . .	24 — 26
Biographical Chart of the Writers affording external evidence in favour of the Apocalypse . . . . .	26 — 27

2. *Of the internal Evidence.*

	Page
A criterion proposed for settling this Evidence, which is as yet imperfect, but in continual progress to perfection . . . . .	28
The concessions of Michaelis, and observations thereon	29 to 32
Of the Visions of Hermas, and on the second book of Esdras . . . . .	33 — 34
Of the doctrines contained in the Apocalypse . . . . .	34 — 36
The objections against the Apocalypse on account of its obscurity, with answers to the same . . . . .	36 — 38

3. *Of the Apocalypse, whether written by St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist.*

Of the objections which arose in the third century, and are collected from the writings of Dionysius of Alexandria and others, by Lardner, under five heads: these severally considered and answered . . . . .	39 — 48
A particular evidence in favour of the question, collected from the book itself . . . . .	48 — 49
The pretensions of the book to divine inspiration, examined by the tests proposed by Michaelis, in six questions . . . . .	49 — 50
Conclusion . . . . .	51

## CONTENTS OF THE NOTES.

## PART I.

*Contains, in ten Sections—ἀ εἰς· that is, the then present state of the Christian Churches in Asia, as known by their omnipresent Lord—Ch. i. ii. iii.*

SECT. I. CHAP. i. 1—3.—The title or inscription of the book . . . . .	55
---	----

	Page
SECT. II. CHAP. i. 4—8.—The address or salutation, and the Doxology . . . . .	57
SECT. III. CHAP. i. 9—20.—The appearance of the Lord Jesus, with the symbols of his power, and the commis- sion given by him to St. John to write what he beheld .	63
SECT. IV. CHAP. ii. 1—7.—Address to the Church in Ephe- sus . . . . .	70
SECT. V. CHAP. ii. 8—11.—Address to the Church in Smyrna	77
SECT. VI. CHAP. ii. 12—17.—Address to the Church in Per- gamos . . . . .	81
SECT. VII. CHAP. ii. 18—29. ————— in Thyatira	85
SECT. VIII. CHAP. iii. 1—6. ————— in Sardis .	91
SECT. IX. CHAP. iii. 7—13.—Address to the Church in Phil- adelphia . . . . .	94
SECT. X. CHAP. iii. 14—22.— Address to the Church in Laodicea . . . . .	97

## PART II.

*Contains, in nine Sections—A general Prophetical Sketch of  
ἡ μελλει γενεσθαι, future events under the six first Seals.*

SECT. I. CHAP. iv.—The representation of the divine <sup>υἱ</sup> Glory in Heaven . . . . .	102
SECT. II. CHAP. v.—The sealed Book, the Lamb <sup>υἱ</sup> who opens it, and the praises sung by the heavenly choir .	115
SECT. III. CHAP. vi. 1, 2.—The opening of the first Seal .	121
SECT. IV. CHAP. vi. 3, 4. ————— the second Seal	126
SECT. V. CHAP. vi. 5, 6. ————— the third Seal .	131
SECT. VI. CHAP. vi. 7, 8. ————— the fourth Seal	138
SECT. VII. CHAP. vi. 9—11. ————— the fifth Seal .	145
SECT. VIII and IX CHAP. vi. 12—17; and CHAP. vii.— the sixth Seal, and the sealing of the 144,000, and the palm-bearing multitude . . . . .	149

## PART III.

*Contains, in seven Sections—The opening of the seventh Seal, the six first Trumpets, and the prophetic commission given to St. John.*

SECT. I. CHAP. viii. 1—5.—The opening of the seventh Seal, and the commission to the angels with the seven Trumpets . . . . .	167
SECT. II and III. CHAP. viii. 6—13.—The four first trumpets, and the denunciation of the three woes . . . . .	172
SECT. IV. CHAP. ix. 1—12.—The fifth trumpet, and first woe . . . . .	187
SECT. V. CHAP. ix. 13—21.—The sixth trumpet . . . . .	208
SECT. VI. CHAP. x. 1—11.—The little book . . . . .	216
SECT. VII. CHAP. xi. 1—14.—The measuring of the temple, and the witnesses . . . . .	223

## PART IV.

*Contains, in four Sections—The sounding of the seventh Trumpet, the Dragon, and the two Wild Beasts.*

SECT. I. CHAP. xi. 15—19.—The sounding of the seventh trumpet . . . . .	239
SECT. II. CHAP. xii. 1—17.—The Woman and the Dragon . . . . .	242
SECT. III. CHAP. xii. 18; xiii. 1—10.—The Wild Beast from the Sea . . . . .	257
SECT. IV. CHAP. xiii. 11—18.—The Beast from the earth or land, styled the false Prophet . . . . .	277

## PART V.

*Contains, in six Sections—The Lamb on Mount Sion, and the Proclamations or Warnings.*

	Page
SECT. I. CHAP. xiv. 1—5.—The Lamb on mount Sion . . . . .	308
SECT. II. CHAP. xiv. 6, 7.—The first Angel proclaims . . . . .	312
SECT. III. CHAP. xiv. 8.—The second Angel proclaims . . . . .	313
SECT. IV. CHAP. xiv. 9—12.—The third Angel proclaims . . . . .	314
SECT. V. CHAP. xiv. 13.—The blessedness of those who die in the Lord, proclaimed . . . . .	316
SECT. VI. CHAP. xiv. 14—20.—The vision of the Harvest, and of the Vintage . . . . .	317

## PART VI.

*Contains, in five Sections—The Seven Vials; and the Harlot of Babylon, and her fall.*

SECT. I. CHAP. xv.; and CHAP. xvi. 1.—The Vision preparatory to the seven Vials . . . . .	320
SECT. II. CHAP. xvi. 2—21.—The seven Vials . . . . .	324
SECT. III. CHAP. xvii.—The Great Harlot, or Babylon . . . . .	348
SECT. IV. CHAP. xviii.—The judgment of the great Harlot . . . . .	370
SECT. V. CHAP. xix. 1—10.—Exultation in heaven upon the fall of Babylon, and the approach of the new Jerusalem . . . . .	380

## PART VII.

*Contains, in seven Sections—The grand conflict and victory over the Beast and false Prophet; the Dragon taken and confined; the Millennium; the Dragon loosed, and deceiving the Nations, is cast into the burning Lake; the general Judgment; and the new Creation.*

SECT. I. CHAP. xix. 11—18.—The Lord descends to battle and victory . . . . .	385
SECT. II. CHAP. xix. 19—21.—The conflict, and the victory over the wild Beast, and false Prophet . . . . .	387

	Page
SECT. III. CHAP. XX. 1—3.—The Dragon taken and confined . . . . .	389
SECT. IV. CHAP. XX. 4—6.—The Millennium . . . . .	390
SECT. V. CHAP. XX. 7—10.—Satan loosed, deceiveth the nations, and is cast into the burning Lake . . . . .	393
SECT. VI. CHAP. XX. 11—15.—The general Judgment . . . . .	395
SECT. VII. CHAP. XXI. 1—8.—The New Creation . . . . .	396

## PART VIII.

*Contains, in two Sections—the description of the Bride, or new Jerusalem; and the Conclusion.*

SECT. I. CHAP. XXI. 9, to the end; CHAP. XXII. 1—5. The Bride, or New Jerusalem . . . . .	402
SECT. II. CHAP. XXII. 6, to the end.—The Conclusion . . . . .	409

## THE APPENDIX.

### IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.—Comparison of the Prophecies in the Apocalypse, chapters xiii. and xix. with those of the Prophet Daniel in chapter vii.; and of St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians, chapter ii. . . . .	416
PART II.—Comparison of Popery with Mahometism, as fulfilling the symbols of the two Horns, of the second wild Beast, or false Prophet . . . . .	420

## PREFACE.

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THAT the reader may be acquainted with the design and tendency of this publication, it is necessary to lay before him the circumstances under which it was undertaken.

In the first place, I must revert to my former work upon the same subject published in the year 1805.<sup>1</sup> That book had its origin in a resolution formed by me, to study the Apocalyptic prophecies without the usual aid of commentators. The circumstances which produced it were as follows:—In my preparation for holy orders, having gone through the sacred writings of the Old and New Testament, I came to this last and most difficult book. Here I found a pause necessary, to supply me with able and safe aids, before I could venture to proceed. In this difficulty I consulted my theological friends,

<sup>1</sup> “The Apocalypse of St. John translated ; with Notes critical and explanatory ; to which is prefixed, a Dissertation on the divine Origin of the Book, &c. By JOHN CHAPPEL WOODHOUSE, M.A. Archdeacon of Salop, &c. Hatchard, London. 1805.”

and from them I collected, that the writers upon the Apocalypse were almost innumerable, very discordant, and that none of them had afforded general and entire satisfaction. I perceived, that with my present stock of knowledge and attainment, I might expect to be bewildered in the variety and discrepancy of explanation; and I resolved to defer my acquaintance with this sacred book, till I could approach it with better hopes of success.

In the mean time, I determined to prepare myself, by an extensive and accurate knowledge of the holy Scriptures, of the Christian writings in the early centuries, the Fathers of the Church, and the ecclesiastical historians; and at the same time, to avoid all publications which might prejudice me in favour of any particular interpretation.

For many years, however, my engagements in active duties prevented the accomplishment of my intentions. At length the time arrived, when I could employ my leisure for literature—the “*horæ subsecivæ*” of Cicero—upon this interesting subject. A few years out of twelve were then occupied in such preparative studies, and the remainder in endeavouring to understand, interpret, and arrange the prophecies, as they appear reported in my work.

Having completed my labours, I submitted them to an highly-valued friend, who, having carefully perused them, and suggested some improvements, recommended their immediate publication.

The work, however, did not prove generally attractive; the public mind being at that time preoccupied with the more amusing speculations of



other commentators, who found the fulfilment of the prophecies in question in the passing events of the day, or in bold and confident exposure of the future history of the world.

On the other hand, I had my reward, in the approbation of my learned friends, and of some distinguished prelates, to whom I presented copies of the work. Among the latter, I have the pleasure to enumerate the late Bishop Hurd; and, as his testimony supports the principles on which this, as well as my former work is conducted, I shall not hesitate to lay it before the public. It may be seen in a copy of the book, in the library of Hartlebury Castle, which the Bishop bequeathed to his successors in the see, and is thus written by his Lordship's own hand:

“ This is the best book of its kind that I have seen; it owes its superiority chiefly to two things—1. The author's understanding, for the most part, the apocalyptic *symbols* in a spiritual, not a literal sense. 2. To the care he has taken to fix the precise *import* of those symbols, from the use made of them by the old prophetic, and other writers of the Old and New Testament. Still, many difficulties remain, and will remain, to the time of the end.

“ R. W.

“ March 15, 1806.”

This testimony found its way into some of the literary journals, and could not fail to produce an

interest in favour of the book. But let it not be thought, that the insertion of it in this place is to gratify literary vanity. Had the Bishop ascribed to the author the praise of that talent and ingenuity with which he has so eloquently adorned the memory of Joseph Mede, I might be thought liable to this imputation : but he confines his commendation to the simple course pursued by the writer in searching the Holy Scriptures for an explanation of the symbols, and in applying them in a spiritual sense : and this is all the commendation I desire.<sup>1</sup>

I proceed to state the rules, or canons, which in the former work were proposed by me, as the chart and compass to direct my course, in the untried sea upon which I was about to embark. It is necessary to repeat them, as they form the basis of interpretation adopted in the present work.

In entering upon this most important considera-

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies, &c. at the Warburtonian Lecture ; by R. HURD, D.D. &c. : consult Sermon X. in which it appears, that the Bishop had at that time a strong predilection for Mede's system of interpretation. And it may be thought extraordinary, that in his latter years he should speak so favourably of another book, the tendency of which is, in many parts, to show the invalidity of Mede's deductions. But the learning and genius of this distinguished prelate, were not superior to his candour and rectitude of mind. At one time, he admires the genius of a writer who seems to force his way over all impediments in pursuit of truth : at a later day, he acquiesces in the better fortune of another, who pursues an humbler and more sure course for the attainment of his object.

tion, the question which first commanded my attention was,—“ From what source can we reasonably expect to derive the safest and surest means of understanding the figurative prophetic language of the Apocalypse?” The proper answer appeared obvious, and attended with little or no difficulty: for, if the Apocalypse be of divine revelation, an uniformity must be expected to subsist between this and other portions of sacred Scripture. If the same divine Spirit which dictated the preceding prophecies, were also the Inspirer of the apocalyptic visions, a mutual relation must subsist between them; and the light derived from the one must contribute most beneficially to the elucidation of the other.

This then was the first principle, upon which I resolved to ground my method of investigation;—*to compare the language, the symbols, the predictions of the Apocalypse, with those of former revelations; and to admit only such interpretation, as should appear to have the sanction of this divine authority.*

A second controlling principle seemed necessary. For, as the language, symbols, and predictions thus interpreted by the assistance of Scripture, were to be applied afterwards to historical facts, a preliminary question seemed to occur;—to what kind of history are they to be applied? To profane history, or sacred? to the extensive and boundless mass of the gentile history, or, exclusively, to that of God’s chosen people? To assist me in answering this question, I had recourse to the preceding prophecies of the Old and New Testament. How have we been authorized to explain these? In what kind of his-

tory do they appear to have been accomplished? The answer was at hand—the *history of the Church of God*. For, in this sacred history we find the divine prophecies principally, and almost exclusively fulfilled: for, whenever sacred prophecy is seen to deviate from this its peculiar object, it is in such instances only, wherein the fortunes of God's people have become necessarily involved with those of heathen nations. When the people of God were to become subservient to the four monarchies, the character, and succession, and fates of those monarchies were predicted: but the main object continually kept in view, was their deliverance from these successive yokes, by the superseding dominion of the Messiah. This supreme and universal dominion, gradually and finally to prevail, appears to be the grand object of all sacred prophecy: and revolutions of worldly power among the Gentiles, seem to be noticed only at those times when they impede or promote it.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the prophecies of the Apocalypse appeared to be applicable principally, if not solely, to the fates and fortunes of the Christian Church; to the progress or retardment of that kingdom of the Messiah, which, when these predictions were delivered, had already begun to obtain its

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Hurd on Prophecy, serm. 2d and 3d. And the extension of divine prophecy to the nations, may be observed to take place in exact proportion to their increasing connexion with the Jews. First, Moab, Edom, Amalek, the Philistines, &c. are noticed; then Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, &c.; afterwards the four great monarchies; and lastly, the Gog and Magog, the distant and barbarous nations.

establishment in the world. And I conceived myself obliged to adopt, as a controlling principle of interpretation, that *unless the language and symbols of the Apocalypse should in particular passages direct, or evidently require another mode of application, the predictions were to be applied to events occurring in the progressive kingdom of Christ.*<sup>1</sup>

In the wide field of universal history, innumerable events may be selected by the industry of investigators, seeming to bear resemblance to the figurative pictures of holy writ. Instances of wars, famines, conquests, and revolutions, may be separated from that infinite mass of information, appearing to assimilate to images presented in prophecy. Some restriction is therefore necessary to guide investigation, and to serve as chart and compass through such extensive and difficult seas ; and what can be deemed more proper than this principle, which derives its authority from the analogy of sacred Scripture ?

A third controlling principle seemed also requisite, arising from a consideration of the nature and

<sup>1</sup> There are discoverable in scriptural prophecy, and generally acknowledged by divines, two advents or comings of our Lord ; 1st. his personal appearance in the flesh ; 2dly. his progress to complete dominion, by the subjection of all his enemies. The first of these had already taken place when the apocalyptic prophecies were delivered. The latter, therefore, is the object to which we are principally to look, when we attempt to assort these predictions. Accordingly, the subject of this prophetic book will appear to be generally, *the fates and fortunes of the Christian Church, from the ascension of our Lord, and the preaching of his Apostles, to the great consummation of all things.*



kind of that kingdom, which had thus appeared to be the grand object of the prophecies. It is a kingdom not temporal, but spiritual; “not a kingdom of this world,” (John xviii. 36.) not established by the means and apparatus of worldly power and pomp,<sup>1</sup> not bearing the external ensigns of royalty; but governing the inward man, by possession of the ruling principles; “The kingdom of God,” says our Lord, “is within you.” (Luke xvii. 21.)

Such a kingdom may be in a great degree independent of the fates and revolutions of empires; affected only by those changes in the political world which are calculated to produce the increase or decline of religious knowledge, and of pure profession and practice. Wars therefore, and conquests, and revolutions of vast extent, and of great political import, may be supposed to take place, even in the Christian world, without becoming the proper object of Christian prophecy. The inhabitants of the Christian world may be subdued by a ferocious conqueror; the sufferings of the vanquished may be such as result from ferocious conquest; the faithful servants of Christ may undergo their common share in this calamity, may suffer grievously in their property and in their persons: yet, in such times of general distress, if their religion be not denied them; if they enjoy those consolations, which, under such afflictions, their religion is designed to bestow; if, corrected by the awful visitation, not only they, but Christians of looser practice, and the inhabitants of

<sup>1</sup> Ου μετα παρατηρησεως. Luke xvii. 20.

the earth in general, shall be seen to turn to their God, and allow to his purifying religion its divine influence on their hearts and lives :—shall we expect that such a revolution should be predicted as a calamity, as a woe ? Our conception of the nature of Christ's kingdom, (the object of such prophecy,) will determine us to answer in the negative. But if such a conqueror, after having subdued the bodies of men, should proceed to extend his usurped dominion over their souls ; should require them to renounce their allegiance to the heavenly King ; to deny their God and Redeemer ;—then will succeed a conflict of another nature, and a resistance deserving the notice and interference of divine prophecy. Then will be employed those arms, which properly belong to this spiritual warfare, (Eph. vi. 16;) then will the kingdom of God be truly advanced or diminished. I describe this imaginary conquest, succeeded by such spiritual conflict, only as what may happen ; not adverting to any similar instances which have occurred. I mention them to show with what previous notions I formed the rules of interpretation, for which I deem myself accountable.

In adopting the rule now under consideration, I have been obedient to the direction of holy Scripture ; which has required a spiritual interpretation of its mysteries, (1 Cor. ii. 12—15 :) they are not to be taken according to the bare letter, (2 Cor. iii. 6,) nor in a carnal or worldly acceptation, (John vi. 26—63.) The warfare of the Christian kingdom, (the subject of these prophecies,) is not to be carried on by worldly arms and battles ; (John xviii.

36;) they who entertain such notions of this religion, “know not what manner of spirit it is of,” (Luke ix. 55.) As the Captain of our salvation conquered by suffering, and refused the sword of Peter, and the legions of angels, ready for his defence, (Heb. ii. 10; Matt. xxvii. 52—55,) so neither by external force must his followers expect to prevail. The kingdom of God is not advanced by crusades; nor is the sword of man employed successfully to seat the Messiah on his throne. To obtain his destined dómínion, Christ must reign in the hearts and consciences of his far-extended subjects. His reign is advanced when Christian principles, when faith, and righteousness, and charity, abound. It is retarded when ignorance, impurity, idolatrous superstition, infidelity, and wickedness, prevail.<sup>1</sup>

From these considerations, this third rule of interpretation may be thus expressed:

3. *That as the kingdom of Christ, the object of the apocalyptic prophecies, is spiritual, so they are to be understood in a spiritual sense. Spiritual things are to be compared with spiritual, as says St. Paul. (1 Cor. ii. 13.)*

A fourth general rule of interpretation has been also adopted in the prosecution of this work. Not to attempt the particular explanation of those pro-

<sup>1</sup> As the prophecies of the Old Testament, interpreted carnally by the Jews to designate a worldly conqueror, have been seen to lead that infatuated people into egregious error; so, in these days of superior light, when by experience, as well as divine direction, a spiritual interpretation is so clearly recommended and enforced, it seems extraordinary that any sober and well-informed Christian can look to any other.



phesies which remain yet to be fulfilled. Few words will show the reasonable foundation of this rule, which I am sorry to observe so frequently transgressed. They shall be borrowed from Sir Isaac Newton: “ God gave these, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men’s curiosity, by enabling them to foreknow things ; but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event, and his own providence, not the interpreter’s, be then manifested thereby to the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Having thus informed the reader of the connexion subsisting between my former publication and that which is now before him, I shall state the circumstances under which the latter was undertaken.

After the publication of my first volume, many years passed away, during which my engagements, in other and paramount duties, so completely superseded my apocalyptical studies, that I had almost forgotten their results. My interest in the subject was however unexpectedly renewed in the year 1818, by a communication from the Rev. Dr. Van Mildert, then regius professor of divinity at Oxford, and now Lord Bishop of Durham. In this communication, which was introduced between us by a common friend highly esteemed by both, I was informed, that the professor was then reading a work, recently published by Mr. Slade, of Cambridge, for the use of students in divinity, and as a companion to Ellsley’s notes on the Gospels ; that being much

<sup>1</sup> Sir Isaac Newton on the Apocalypse, p. 251.

pleased with it, as far as he had gone, he intended to recommend it in his ensuing lectures ; and added, that the series might be very happily completed, by an abridgment (on the same plan, and for the same class of readers) of my work on the Apocalypse,—to be made by me, or some one under my direction, and embracing, if I should think proper, any additional matter from other sources, which might promote the object in view. The professor, to whom I was at that time personally unknown, added most obligingly, that “ he should be very glad to hear from me, if I should find the matter worthy of my attention, and to communicate his ideas more fully.”

This proposal, coming from a person, whose reputation for ability, learning, and judgment in theological researches was so eminently established, could not be otherwise than highly gratifying to me. Therefore entering into correspondence with him, I professed myself most willing to undertake the work proposed, provided it might be conducted under his direction. In answer to this, I received from the professor a few general observations on the subject ; and he kindly added, that, when he should be sufficiently at leisure, he would read my book a second time, and then give me his thoughts upon the method to be pursued more particularly.

In the next letter, the professor informed me that he had read my dissertation and commentary entirely through, with such other works of the same kind as he could easily refer to. “ And the result,” says he, “ has been, to confirm me in my opinion, that the plan I had taken the liberty to suggest to

you, cannot be placed in better hands." He then proceeds to advise, that a concise abridgment of the dissertation should precede the annotations. In the next place he recommends, in order to keep the work in due compass, that the columns, containing the original text and twofold translation, should be omitted, since, whatever is important in the improved translation, may be introduced into the annotations. "Respecting the annotations themselves, I should be inclined to say, that a mere abridgment of your own commentary, or selections from it, might fully answer the purpose, did it not seem desirable that the work should bear the aspect of a *Synopsis Criticorum*, so far as relates to commentators of good repute, such as Mede, Daubuz, Vitringa, Hammond, Newton, Lowman. This will make it more conformable to the plan adopted by Elsley and Slade; and it will enable the student in some measure to form his own judgment on questionable passages, while it will not preclude you from specially directing his attention to that interpretation which you deem preferable. Perhaps there is no book of Scripture, in which we can less expect to concur with any single commentator who has taken it in hand, than this of the Apocalypse; therefore it may be sometimes the safest, as well as the easiest course, to offer the reader a choice of different expositions."

For these directions, so judiciously suggested, and agreeing perfectly with my own notions on the subject, I returned my sincere thanks, and cheerfully entered upon the task.

I had proceeded in it so far, as to complete the proposed abridgment of the Dissertation, and nearly half of the notes, when my progress was impeded by a severe and protracted illness.

On resuming my labours, after a long interval, yet sooner than I ought to have done, it appeared to me, for the first time, that my work might be deemed not sufficiently accordant with those of my respected predecessors, Ellsley and Slade. This difficulty however was soon removed by the following consideration.

The difference in the subjects treated by us respectively, must necessarily occasion considerable difference in our method of treating them. They, in their departments, had very few prophecies to develop and explain; and these are delivered, for the most part, in *literal and plain language*. The expositor of the Apocalypse has little else than prophecy upon his hands, predictions couched in symbolical terms, and forming difficult enigmas. It was easy for them to bring into a short compass the opinions of preceding commentators, and either leave them to the reader, or assist him by observations of their own. My task required that I should examine each prophecy by analytical deduction, and by such means, and the concurring assistance of former writers, lay before the student the best exposition in my power. And this exposition could not be accomplished without a frequent reference to my former work, in which the opinions of the best commentators had already been diligently canvassed.

I was no sooner reassured upon this subject, than

another difficulty appeared, not so easily overcome. This arose from my comparing the part of my work so far accomplished, with that upon which I was now to enter. The first contained the explication of those prophecies, which are generally supposed to have already received their fulfilment in history. In this department, the interpretation of a prediction is greatly assisted by a conviction that the fulfilment is probably to be found in the range of history. And the sure test of its truth is at hand; for the right assortment of the event is to be proved, by its agreement with the symbolical picture of it, as exhibited in the historical narration.

The prophecies upon which I was now about to enter, I knew to be of a more difficult character, as containing predictions fulfilled in part only, and destined to receive their final completion in events yet to come. Such arise out of the *Βιβλιαριδιον*, the little book, seeming to run the space of the 1260 years.

In these the cautious interpreter has found difficulties, which seem not yet surmounted, by writers of more daring genius, who have ventured to ascertain the commencement and termination of these prophetic eras.

When I resumed my studies, I had gone through the easier part of my engagement, and had to face one of more arduous character. At that time my health was unequal to the undertaking, and after some feeble and unsatisfactory attempts, I abandoned it for the present, contenting myself with leaving what I had already effected (a portion



complete in itself) for future publication, if circumstances should call for it.

In this situation my papers continued till the end of the year 1824, when an occurrence in the literary world induced me to examine the opinion I had given in my former work concerning one of these prophecies, as yet fulfilled only in part. From a review of this I proceeded to others of the same class ; and, my spirit of enquiry reviving, I resumed my suspended pursuits. I resumed them with a determination to attempt the solution of the more difficult prophecies by a new analysis, without previously referring to the expositions of them, deduced either by myself, or others. Whether in any, or to what degree I may have succeeded in these attempts, I must leave to the judgment of those of my readers who are best qualified to estimate them.

In the execution of the task assigned me, I have consulted a second time the best commentators, especially those enumerated and recommended by my excellent patron, together with others who had been useful to my first publication. Of all these I esteem Vitringa the most valuable. Yet it so happened, that, in my former work, I did not reap all the benefit I might from his *Anacrisis*. I had the book for some time in my hands, but was obliged to relinquish it before I could obtain another copy, and I am sorry to add, before I was so perfectly aware of my loss, as to feel myself indispensably obliged to redress it. In the present work I have availed myself of his labours to a much greater extent, and

have had the pleasure to find his interpretations more accordant to my own, than those of any other writer of that period.

Of modern writers on the Apocalypse, I have generally forborne to bring forward the names, or canvass the opinions, yet I have not neglected them; taking care to obtain such an insight into their productions, as might enable me to correct my notions by theirs, in any instances which seem to require it.

With the greater part of these authors, who have imagined the prophecies to be fulfilled almost entirely in the French revolution, I seem to have no common relation, except that the same divine book is the object of our studies. We are not amenable to the same rules of enquiry, or under any similar restriction; and the consequence has been, that our several interpretations have diverged, to such a distance from each other, that there is no hope of mutual accommodation but by the ungrateful and unpromising means of *controversy*,—a method of conviction which I have always avoided, and am still more desirous to decline, at my present advanced period of life.<sup>1</sup> I wish at the same time to acknow-

<sup>1</sup> No one can wonder, that the prophecies have been diligently searched, for predictions relating to the French revolution,—that formidable series of events, which has so occupied the times in which we have lived. At its first irruption, I was perfectly alive to the danger in which it seemed to place our holy religion. I watched its progress with extreme anxiety for a time. But as it advanced into magnitude, involving the fates of other nations, it was easy to perceive that the danger to religion decreased, in proportion as that

ledge my sincere respect for that display of genius and learning, and that spirit of enquiry, which has distinguished some of these productions.

And here I must also testify my regret, that, under this general determination concerning living authors, I am not at liberty to express in particular my feelings towards those writers, who, with candour and courtesy, have acquiesced in my peculiar opinions, and adopted them, more or less, into their own expositions. I request them, in this only way now left to me, to accept my sincere thanks.

which affected the rights and happiness of the political world increased, till the object of the wide-spreading contest became wholly political. The religious persecution, while it lasted, was expended upon the massacred and expatriated priests of the Roman Catholic persuasion, and afterwards upon the Pontiff himself, but chiefly for political purposes. The Protestants escaped, excepting so far as they were politically engaged; and in France, the centre of religious violence, they obtained, from their government, a toleration of their religion, which they had never enjoyed since the revocation of the edict of Nantes. This blessing has been since secured to them by the charter of their restored kings.

The raging conflict at length ceased in all parts, subsiding into a general peace; in which the interests of the nations, political and religious, have been settled upon a basis more firm and rational than before; and a prospect is opened for a much greater advance and improvement in the means of national and individual happiness.

More will be said upon the French revolution, as a subject of sacred prophecy, in the sequel. In the mean time, it must be apparent to the reader, that consistently with my second and third rules of interpretation, the French revolution cannot be considered as *a woe, upon the pure Christian religion*, nor can we expect that it should have been predicted as such in the divine prophecies.



I conclude by saying, that as the *object* of this publication is, to lead the student in divine prophecy by a safer course than he has hitherto been led, to the interpretation of a very important but difficult book of sacred Scripture, I regret that it has not been sooner and better accomplished.



A CONCISE REVIEW

OF THE EVIDENCE FOR THE AUTHENTICITY AND DIVINE  
INSPIRATION OF

**The Apocalypse ;**

TOGETHER WITH

A VINDICATION OF IT FROM THE OBJECTIONS OF THE LATE  
PROFESSOR J. D. MICHAELIS



A

## CONCISE REVIEW,

&c. &c.

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I HAVE already mentioned, that this work was undertaken at the suggestion of the Bishop of Durham, and that his lordship had kindly consented to give some directions as to the best mode of conducting it. Among these was a proposal, “that a concise abridgement of the preliminary Dissertation should precede the annotations; more especially, as it successfully controverts the opinions of Michaelis, whose work is generally recommended to young students, and carries with it a high authority.”

Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament first appeared in the English language under the translation of a distinguished critic and divine,<sup>1</sup> who had accompanied one half of it with valuable notes, correcting the errors of his author; but the remainder, containing in its last chapter an elaborate attack on the scriptural authenticity of the Apocalypse, had not yet received the benefit of any such comment.

The character of the German Professor for deep learning and acute criticism was such, as to justify an alarm, that his objections to the Apocalypse, if unrefuted, would obtain an extensive influence.

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Marsh, B. D., now Lord Bishop of Peterborough, and Margaret Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.

The refutation of them appeared to me important; and as I felt, that my long engagement in apocalyptic studies had in some degree prepared me for the undertaking, I turned my thoughts to the subject. I did not however hope to dispose of the question altogether, but only to afford a temporary check to the progress of these German opinions in this country, until the learned editor should resume his notes, and, as I confidently expected, set the matter to rest. Under these impressions I addressed a series of letters to Mr. Marsh, suggesting such arguments as had occurred to me, and expressing a hope that he would complete his notes and observations, and more especially that he would employ his superior talents and advantages on the misconceptions of his author, with respect to the Apocalypse.

These letters were published anonymously; but in a short time I was gratified by receiving, through my publisher, the following message addressed by Mr. Marsh to the unknown writer:—"that he had read the pamphlet with very great pleasure, and that in his opinion the author had performed his task so well, that it would be unnecessary for him to attempt any thing further."

Thus encouraged, I determined to correct and enlarge what I had written, and in the form of a Dissertation, to prefix it to my commentary.<sup>1</sup>

I will now proceed to offer to my readers an abstract of it; and should any of them be inclined to

<sup>1</sup> After the appearance of my book, Mr. Marsh was pleased to send me a very obliging letter, which he concluded with these words:—"The friendly and flattering invitation which you gave me in the first letter of your pamphlet, it is even unnecessary for me to accept, after what you yourself have done on the same subject."

About the same time I was favoured by a letter from another professor of divinity at Cambridge, the late eminent Dr. Watson, Lord Bishop of Llandaff. Speaking in particular of the Disserta-

see the arguments more largely developed, and to exercise his critical powers more fully on this question, he must be referred to the Dissertation.

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The evidence to be examined divides itself into two parts, the external and the internal. The external is that which is derived from credible witnesses, from the early writers and fathers of the Church. The internal is that which results from a perusal of the book.

## I. OF THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

The evidence *external*, for the authenticity and divine inspiration of the Apocalypse, is to be collected from the testimonies of those ancient writers, who, living at a period at no great distance from the time of its publication, appear, by their affirmations, quotations, or allusions, to have received it as a book of sacred scripture. This was the test by which the primitive Church was accustomed to determine the claims of all writings pretending to divine authority. All such were rejected, which appeared not to have been received by the Orthodox Christians of the preceding ages.<sup>1</sup>

But to enable us to judge of the force of this evidence, he thus writes:—"The testimonies of Justin and Irenæus I have for many years considered as very much to be relied on respecting the author of the Apocalypse, from their having lived so near the time in which it was written; and your work has not only confirmed me in my opinion, but probably laid the question at rest."

The opinions of these superior judges are inserted in order to incline the student to give a more decided attention to this part of the work; and thus to place himself upon his guard against any false notions, concerning the claims of the Apocalypse to a divine origin.

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. c. 3.

dence, as affecting any particular book of scripture, it is necessary to ascertain *the time when that book was written*. For if it shall appear to have been written and published in the early period of the apostolic age, we may expect testimonies concerning it, from apostles, or from apostolical men.<sup>1</sup> If it can be shown on the contrary, that it was published in the very latest times of that age, it will be in vain to expect any earlier notice of it.

Various opinions have been advanced, concerning the time when the Apocalypse was published, chiefly by those writers who have been desirous to accommodate it to their interpretations of the prophecies, which they suppose to have been fulfilled in the first century.<sup>2</sup> But that the Apocalypse was not published before the year 96 or 97, has been, from that time to the present, the almost universal opinion of the Christian Church. Michaelis admits it; and, with other German writers, who are desirous of establishing a contrary opinion, has endeavoured to press *Irenæus* into their service. If this attempt should fail them, they will be left without any resource; and therefore I shall state it at large, together with the answer to it, as it has appeared in the Dissertation.

Irenæus was born, according to his own account, (as his words have been generally understood,) in the age immediately succeeding that in which the visions of the Apocalypse were seen.<sup>3</sup> He was a

<sup>1</sup> Apostolical men are those, who may be supposed to have received instruction personally from apostles. The apostolical age is that, which extends from the middle of the first century, when the apostles began to write, to the close of that century, when St. John, the last surviving apostle, died.

<sup>2</sup> These may be seen discussed by Michaelis in his last chapter, and considered again by the author in his Dissertation. The evidences in their behalf are so weak, that it seems unnecessary to report them in this abstract.

<sup>3</sup> The learned Dodwell has taken pains to show that Irenæus was



Greek by birth, as his name and language import, and probably an Asiatic Greek, for he was an auditor of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, one of the seven Churches, and who had been the auditor of St. John the apostle, whom Irenæus constantly affirms to be the writer of the Apocalypse.<sup>1</sup> And accordingly, when Irenæus speaks upon such subjects as concern the external evidences of the Church, he appeals, in confirmation, to Polycarp and others, who, he says, had seen the apostle John. He appeals also to the Asiatic Churches, in which he appears to have been educated.<sup>2</sup> When removed from Asia into Gaul, (where, upon the martyrdom of Pothinus, he became Bishop of Lyons,) he kept up a correspondence with the brethren of the Asiatic Churches, from whom he would continue to receive the most genuine information concerning the Apocalypse. He was, in his own character, the most learned, pious, prudent, and venerable prelate of his age. He wrote largely in defence of the truth, and it has been a prevailing opinion in the Church, that he sealed his testimony with his blood.

Here then is a witness of the highest authority, whose evidence has been accordingly received by the writers succeeding to his time, and, with very few exceptions, by the universal Church.<sup>3</sup> Nor, until these

born in the year 97, the very year in which it will appear that the Apocalypse was published. But there is reason to suppose that he has fixed the birth of this Father about ten years too early.—Grabe's Proleg. ad Irenæum.

<sup>1</sup> Iren. iii. 3. Euseb. H. E. iv. 14, 16. v. 19, 20. Iren. iv. 50. v. 26, 28, 30, 34, 35. Lardner's Supplement, p. 348, 378. Cave, Hist. Litt. art. Irenæus.

<sup>2</sup> Iren. lib. iii. 3. v. 8. Euseb. H. E. lib. iv. 14. v. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Michaelis, in another part of his work, considers the testimony of Irenæus, in relation to St. John's writings, of the highest authority. "Irenæus," says he, "is not only the most ancient writer on this subject, but was a disciple of Polycarp, who was personally acquainted with St. John; consequently Irenæus had the very best

days, has there been the least doubt of the import of his evidence ; no one has seen occasion to interpret his words otherwise than according to the obvious and received meaning, “ *that the visions of the Apocalypse were seen towards the end of Domitian’s reign.*” But since a novel interpretation of these words has been attempted by the German critics, in order to make them subservient to their preconceived opinions, it will be necessary to produce them.

Irenæus, speaking of the mystical name (666) ascribed to Antichrist in the xiii<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Apocalypse, and of the difficulty of its interpretation, adds :—*εἰ δὲ ἐδεῖ ἀναφανδὸν ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ κηρυττεσθαι τὸ ὄνομα τῆς τοῦ, δι’ ἐκεῖνος ἀν’ ἐρρεθῇ τῆς καὶ τὴν ἀποκαλύψιν ἐωρακατος. Οὐδὲ γὰρ πρὸ πολλῆς κρονὸς ἐωραθῇ, ἀλλὰ σκεδὸν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας γενεᾶς, πρὸς τὸ τέλος τῆς Δομετιανῆς ἀρχῆς.* Which may be thus literally translated :—“ But if it had been proper, that this name should be openly proclaimed in this present time, it would have been told even by him who saw the Apocalypse (or Revelation.) For it was not seen a long time ago, but almost in our own age, (or generation,) toward the end of Domitian’s reign.”

These words are plain and unequivocal ; nor does it appear that any variety of interpretation of them arose during sixteen hundred years, in which they were read by the Christian Church. And, indeed, now the only doubt offered to our consideration by the perverse ingenuity of the German critics is, “ What is it that Irenæus affirms to have been *seen* in Domitian’s reign ? What does the word *seen* refer to ? What is the nominative to the verb *εωραθῇ* ?” Now, I will venture to say, that no Greek scholar,

information on this subject.” *Introd.* vol. iii. c. 7. See also his learned translator’s judicious remarks on the importance of Irenæus’s testimony.

unbiassed by any favourite opinion, can possibly suppose that the verb *εωραθη*, ("was seen,") can be referred to any other nominative than Ἡ Αποκαλυψις ("the Revelation.") But it is not a matter wherein a critical knowledge of the Greek tongue is required, to enable us to decide. Plain common sense is to supply what is wanting in the sentence. And no person, possessed of that valuable qualification, can read this passage, translated literally into any language, without perceiving, that the thing represented to be *seen* in the latter clause, must be the same as was said to have been *seen* in the former. Otherwise there is no dependence on common language; and we must be compelled to use the repetitions which are in usage among the lawyers. Thus Irenæus, if he were to write in modern times, especially in Germany, must be instructed to say, after the word "Revelation," not "*It was seen,*" but the "aforesaid Revelation was seen."

However, it is amusing to observe, that these ingenious critics, though they agree in rejecting the obvious sense of this passage, as subversive of their common object, cannot settle among themselves how it is to be understood, what noun should supply the nominative to *εωραθη* in the room of Αποκαλυψις. Michaelis mentions some of these attempts, which at the same time he justly deems *improbable*. There is one only which he favours, and this refers *εωραθη* to το ονομα,—a proposal as forced and improbable as any of the rest. For, *what was seen?* Answer, *the NAME was seen*. If Irenæus had intended this meaning, he would not have written *εωραθη* but ηκισθη, not *was seen*, but *was heard*. Michaelis has suggested this difficulty, but at the same time he proposes the word Titan or Teitan, which in another place Irenæus had mentioned as one of the names proposed as representative of the mystical number 666. But

this is worse and worse: it is to break all bounds of grammatical connexion. And to suppose, as this forced construction requires, that Irenæus understood the prophecy to be fulfilled in his time, by the emperor Domitian being Titan and Antichrist, is to make Irenæus contradict himself. For this excellent father plainly tells us, that he understood not this prophecy, and that in his opinion, “it is better to wait the completion of it, than to guess at names which may seem to fit the mystical figures.”<sup>1</sup> Besides, the *context* of Irenæus, with this passage, will admit none of these novel, forced interpretations, and will accommodate to none but the old and obvious acceptance. It is his object, to dissuade his readers from a difficult and presumptuous attempt, to proclaim who is the Antichrist by applying in the manner he had shown the Greek figures 666. And his argument is to this effect:—“the mystery was not intended to be cleared up in our times; for if it had, it would have been told by him who saw the vision.” This implies that the vision had been seen *lately*. But to complete the argument, and support the last clause of it, which was not yet *perfectly clear*, Irenæus adds, “for it was seen at no great distance from our own times.”

In short, all these new interpretations are inconsistent, and have no support but what they derive from the Latin translation of the passage, which is very faulty in this place, as it is known to be in many others;<sup>2</sup> and had it been of greater authority as a translation, it could only disclose the translator’s opinion. But as we possess the original Greek, we must have recourse to this genuine text of the writer, and not be led away by the blunders of his translator.

<sup>1</sup> Lib. v. See also Euseb. H. E. lib. iii. c. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Grabe asserts, and proves it to be barbarous and defective.—Prolog. in Irenæum.

The words of Irenæus, of this most competent and unexceptionable witness, being thus received in that obvious sense which has been affixed to them by all the ecclesiastical writers before our own days,<sup>1</sup> will determine the time when the apocalyptic visions were seen and published, namely, toward the end of Domitian's reign.

Internal evidence likewise supports this conclusion; for, in the three first chapters of the Apocalypse, the Churches of Asia are represented as having attained to that flourishing state of society and settlement, and to have undergone afterwards those changes in their faith and morals, which might have taken place in the period intervening between the publication of St. Paul's Epistles and the close of Domitian's reign, but were not likely to have been effected in a shorter time.

The death of Domitian happened in A. D. 96; and St. John obtained his liberty, and returned to Ephesus. He would then, if not sooner, publish his Apocalypse, the date of which is fixed by Mill, Lardner, and other able critics, to be of the year 96 or 97.

This important point being thus settled, we may proceed with greater advantage to consider *the external evidence*, which affects the divine authority of the Apocalypse, for the value of this evidence will increase according to its approximation to the time when the book was published. There are many of the fathers who, writing prior to Irenæus, have afforded some testimony of this kind; but in none of them do we find evidence so comprehensive, so positive and direct as his. And as we are already in possession of his superior competency and judgment

<sup>1</sup> Lampe has asserted, and Lardner fully confirms the truth of the assertion, "that all antiquity is abundantly agreed, that Domitian was the author of John's banishment" to Patmos.



in treating questions of this kind,<sup>1</sup> we will begin with his testimony, which, taken by itself, is almost sufficient to decide the question. The others, prior in point of time, but inferior in positive assertion, will afterwards be reviewed with greater advantage.

Irenæus, the auditor of Polycarp and of other apostolical men who had conversed with St. John, had the best means of information concerning the authenticity of the Apocalypse. But Irenæus, in many passages, ascribes this book to "John the Evangelist, the disciple of the Lord,—that John who leaned on his Lord's breast at the last Supper."<sup>2</sup> There are twenty-two chapters in the book of Revelation, and Irenæus quotes from thirteen of them, producing more than twenty-four passages, some of considerable length. The candid and judicious Lardner, after an examination of this evidence, says: "His (Irenæus's) testimony for this book is so strong and full, that, considering the age of Irenæus, he seems to put it beyond all question, that it is the work of John the Apostle and Evangelist."<sup>3</sup>

Thn testimony of Irenæus may be supposed to extend from about thirty or forty years after the date of the Apocalypse, to about eighty years after that period, viz. the year of our Lord 178, when he is said to have published the books which contain this testimony. But during this time of eighty years, other more ancient writers appear to have quoted from, and so to have acknowledged the Apocalypse. We will now proceed to mention

<sup>1</sup> We may justly conclude, from the zeal and judgment which he shows, to discover the true reading of a passage in the Apocalypse, (Irenæus, lib. v. c. 30. Euseb. H. E. lib. iii. c. 18.) that he was not wanting in the best methods of pursuing questions of this kind. But to him, in this particular case, the evidence required no such examination. it was plain and positive.

<sup>2</sup> Irenæus, lib. iv. 37, 50, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Cred. Gosp. Hist. art. Irenæus.

these, whose quotations and allusions will give additional weight to the testimony of Irenæus, while, from the recollection of his evidence, theirs also will derive support.

Ignatius is mentioned by Michaelis as the most ancient evidence that can be produced, respecting the authenticity of the Apocalypse. He lived in the apostolical times, and died by a glorious martyrdom in the year 107, as some writers have stated, though others have placed this event somewhat later. He is commonly supposed to have made no mention of the Apocalypse; and this his silence amounts, in the opinion of Michaelis, to a rejection of the book. For since he wrote epistles to the Christian communities at Ephesus, Philadelphia, and Smyrna, it is to be expected, he says, that he would have reminded them of the praises which, in the second and third chapters of the Revelation, their bishops had received from Christ. But let us advert to the peculiar circumstances under which this father of the Church wrote these epistles, which are the only remains of his works. He was a prisoner, upon travel, guarded by a band of soldiers, whom, from their ferocity, he compares to leopards, and by them hurried forward in his passage from Antioch to Rome, there to be devoured by wild beasts. In such circumstances, he would write with perpetual interruptions; and his quotations, depending perhaps on memory alone, would be inaccurate. And from these causes it has happened, that the references of Ignatius to sacred scripture are allusions rather than quotations; and to many of the sacred books he appears not to refer at all. The Epistle to the Ephesians is the only book expressly named by him. Of the Gospels, he only quotes, or plainly alludes to, those of St. Matthew and St. John; and of the books remaining, it is dubious whether he



quotes or alludes to more than six. But shall we affirm, that Ignatius rejected two of the Gospels, and fourteen other books of canonical scripture, because no evident allusion to them appears in his hasty epistles? Michaelis himself, so questioned, could not have consistently made such an affirmation; for he tells us in a passage of his work, on a similar occasion, that “it is no objection to the New Testament if it is so seldom cited by *the apostolic fathers*; and even could any one of them be produced, who had not made a single reference to these writings, it would prove as little against their authenticity, as St. Paul’s never having quoted the Epistles of St. Peter, or the Gospels of St. Matthew or St. Luke.” But if this holds good, as applied to the scriptures in general, it is peculiarly applicable to a book of mysterious prophecy, and of so late publication as the Apocalypse. This will be esteemed a sufficient answer, if it should be thought that Ignatius “has passed over the Apocalypse in silence.” But, from a careful perusal of his epistles, I am inclined to an opposite opinion; and will lay before my readers three passages, in which this Father seems to have referred to the Apocalypse.

REV. i. 9.

Εν ὑπομενῇ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Ignat. ad Rom. ad fin.

Εν ὑπομονῇ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The text of the Apocalypse is here taken from the approved edition of Griesbach; and it is a confirmation to be added to his supports of this text, that it was thus read by Ignatius. This expression, though the idea be quite scriptural, is to be found, I believe, in no other passage of the New Testament, but in this of the Apocalypse only.

REV. xxi. 2.

Τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν ἀπο τοῦ Θεοῦ  
Ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νυμφὴν  
Κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς.

Ignat. ad Ephes. sect. 3.

Λίθοι ναοῦ πατρὸς  
Ἡτοιμασμένοι εἰς οἰκοδομὴν Θεοῦ—κατὰ πάντα  
Κεκοσμημένοι ἐντολαῖς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Here the use of the word *Κεκοσμημενοι*, following so immediately after the words *ητοιμασμενοι* and *Θεου*, and with such connexion of thought and of imagery, affords reason to suppose, that Ignatius had seen this passage of the Apocalypse. Ignatius appears to me to comment on St. John, referring this passage to the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the same images are used, and by a comparison with which it is best explained. A better illustration cannot be given of *κεκοσμημενην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς*, than in these parallel words of Ignatius, *κεκοσμημενην ἐντολαῖς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. The one is the mystical expression, the other is its meaning when disrobed of the figurative dress.

REV. xxi. 3.

Καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἐσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Θεὸς  
ἔσται μετ' αὐτῶν, Θεὸς αὐτῶν.

Ignat. ad Ephes. sect. 15.

ἵνα ὡμεν αὐτοῦ ναοὶ (fors. λαοὶ) καὶ αὐτὸς ἢ ἐν ἡμῖν, Θεὸς ἡμῶν.

Both these passages seem to have reference to 2 Cor. v. 16. *καὶ ἐσομαι αὐτῶν ὁ Θεός, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐσονται μοι λαός*, which is taken from Lev. xxvi. 12. *καὶ ἐσομαι ὑμῶν Θεός, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐσεσθε μοι λαός*: or from Jer. xxxi. 33. *καὶ ἐσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς Θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐσονται μοι εἰς λαόν*; or Jer. xxxii. 38. *καὶ ἐσονται μοι εἰς λαόν, καὶ ἐγὼ ἐσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς Θεόν*; or from Ezek. xxxvii. 23. *καὶ ἐσονται μοι εἰς λαόν, καὶ ἐγὼ κυριὸς ἐσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς Θεόν*.

I have produced all these passages to show in what degree Ignatius can be supposed to quote from, or allude to each. The expression, in the *first part* of the sentence, may be taken from any or all of them, as well as from this passage in the Apocalypse. But the peculiar turn and form of the *latter clause* is only to be found here. And I think it probable that Ignatius would not have relinquished the form observed in the other quotations for this mode of expression, which is very peculiar, if he had not seen and remembered it in the Apocalypse. They

are, indeed, the very same words; only with that grammatical alteration which was necessary to fit them to the circumstances; that is, to the application which Ignatius makes of them to himself, and his readers.

The next writer, from whom Michaelis in vain attempts to extract evidence in support of his views of this question, is the old *Syriac translator*. But it is clearly shown by the learned annotator upon Michaelis's Introduction, that the Syriac version cannot be proved to be of this early date, since the first notice of it is by *Ephrem*, who wrote in the fourth century.<sup>1</sup> It cannot, therefore, be admitted as an evidence belonging to these early Christian times.

HERMAS, or the writer bearing that name, is not mentioned by Michaelis. But Lardner has produced some passages from this book, from which he is inclined to think that Hermas had seen and imitated the Apocalypse. They do not appear to me in this light, nor can we expect it; for Hermas wrote in the first century; Lardner says, towards the end of it; some mention the year 75, others 92: and as the book was written at Rome, it is not likely that the author of it could have seen the Apocalypse, which began to be circulated in Asia only in 97. If, then, Hermas wrote before he could see the Apocalypse, his silence is no evidence against its authenticity; but it may be taken, as a proof additional, that the Apocalypse was not published before the date now assigned to it.

POLYCARP has not been cited as an evidence in the question before us. He is reported by Irenæus to have written many epistles, only one of which has come down to our times. This is so replete with practical exhortations, that there is little reason to expect in it quotations from a mystical book. We

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. ch. 7. sect. 6.

have, however, other reasons for concluding that Polycarp received the Apocalypse as of divine authority; because Irenæus, who so received it, constantly appeals to him and the Asiatic Churches, over one of which Polycarp presided,—for the truth of his assertions. This apostolical man suffered martyrdom, about seventy years after the Apocalypse had been published. An interesting account of this is given in an epistle written from the Church of Smyrna, over which he had presided. In this epistle, part of which is reported by Eusebius,<sup>1</sup> there seem to be some allusions to the Apocalypse, which have hitherto escaped observation; and if the Apocalypse was received by the Church of Smyrna at the time of Polycarp's death, as of divine authority, there can be no doubt but that it was so received by him, their aged bishop and instructor.

In Rev. i. 15.

The feet of the Son of Man are  
described,

Ὁμοιοὶ χαλκολιβανῶ ὡς ἐν καμινῷ πεπυρωμένοι·

In the EPISTLE,

The body of the suffering martyr is  
represented,

Οὐκ ὡς σαρξ καιομένη, ἀλλ' ὡς χρυσοῦς καὶ ἀργυρὸς ἐν καμινῷ πυρωμένοι.

That the writer did not use the word *χαλκολιβανός*, may be accounted for, by his having in view, at the same time, another passage of Scripture, 1 Peter, i. 7, where the apostle compares the suffering Christians to “gold tried by the fire.” But why did he, after having used the word *gold*, omit the *δια πυρός δοκιμαζομένου* of St. Peter, to substitute *ἐν καμινῷ πυρωμένοι*? Why? But because he was led to it by this passage of the Apocalypse? Besides, in Rev. iii. 18, we read also *χρυσιον πεπυρωμενον εκ πυρος*.

The pious and sublime prayer of Polycarp, at the awful moment when the fire was about to be lighted under him, begins with these words: *Κυριε, ὁ Θεος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ*. They are the identical words in the

<sup>1</sup> Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 15.

prayer of the Elders, Rev. xi. 17. *Κυριε, ὁ Θεος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.*

From these instances, some additional confirmation may be derived, that Polycarp, and his disciples of the Church of Smyrna, received the Apocalypse.

PAPIAS belongs also to the apostolical age, and is said to have been an auditor of St. John.<sup>1</sup> He is asserted by Andreas, bishop of Cæsarea in the fifth century, to have given his testimony to the Apocalypse,<sup>2</sup> and is classed by this writer in the list of those who have undoubtedly testified in its favour, with Irenæus, Methodius, and Hippolitus. What writings of Papias had come down to the time of Andreas, we know not; we have only a few short fragments preserved by Eusebius.<sup>3</sup> In these there is no mention of the Apocalypse: they treat of other subjects, of the Gospels chiefly; and to two only of the four Gospels has Papias given any evidence. But no one has hence inferred that he rejected them. Yet, as his writings have reference to the Gospels, the evidence of those neglected by him is more affected by his silence, than that of the Apocalypse, which formed no part of his subject. The same is the case with the quotations from the Epistles of the New Testament by Papias. According to Eusebius, he has left quotations from only two of them, the first of St. Peter, and the first of St. John. Yet no one has supposed that he rejected the other Epistles of the sacred canon. "He confirms these which he has mentioned," says Lardner, "without prejudicing the rest."<sup>4</sup>

Upon the same footing stands his silence concern-

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, lib. v. 33. Eusebius, H. E. lib. iii. c. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Proleg. ad Apoc.

<sup>3</sup> H. E. lib. iii. c. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Cred. Gosp. Hist. art. Papias.



ing the Apocalypse. This silence, in these short fragments of his works, would be no evidence against it, even if we had no assurance that he received it as holy writ. But such assurance we have from Andreas of Cæsarea.<sup>1</sup>

JUSTIN MARTYR was contemporary with the apostolical Fathers whose evidence we have been reviewing. His testimony is full, positive, indubitable. He accounted the Apocalypse to be the production “of John, one of the apostles of Christ.” He names expressly this John as the writer of it.<sup>2</sup> He appears also, from the report of Jerome, to have commented on some parts of this mystical book; but no work of this kind has come down to us.<sup>3</sup>

ATHENAGORAS, contemporary with Polycarp and Justin Martyr, is admitted by Michaelis to have been acquainted with the Apocalypse.

Michaelis has passed over in silence the evidence obtained from that valuable remnant of ecclesiastical antiquity, THE EPISTLE FROM THE GALLIC CHURCHES, which relates the sufferings of their martyrs, about the year 177, eighty years after the publication of the Apocalypse.<sup>4</sup> We owe to Eusebius the preservation of a great part of this letter, in which Lardner has remarked this passage, *Ακολσθων τω Αρνιω ὅπς αν ὑπαγη*. They are the very words of the Apocalypse, (ch. xiv. 4.), and so peculiar in idea and expression, as evidently to be derived from no other source. To this quotation, and another

<sup>1</sup> From this testimony we collect, that Papias had commented upon the Apocalypse: *επι λεξεως* on the text. See cap. xxxiv. Serm. xii. of And. Cæs. Some other objections of Michaelis are reported in the Dissertation, and there answered, it is hoped, satisfactorily. But as they are of a minor character, there is no need to abridge them here.

<sup>2</sup> Dialog. cum Tryphone, lib. vi. c. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Catal. Script. Eccles. c. 9.

<sup>4</sup> This Epistle is supposed by some to be written by Irenæus, at that time a member of that church, but there is no proof of this.

reported in the Dissertation, I have added a third, which had not been noticed before.

In Rev. i. 5. iii. 14.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is called

Ὁ μαρτυρ, ὁ πιστος, καὶ ἀληθινος, ὁ  
πρωτοτοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν.

In the Epistle,

The martyrs give place to Jesus Christ, as,

Τῷ πιστῷ καὶ ἀληθινῷ μαρτυρί, καὶ  
πρωτοτοκῷ τῶν νεκρῶν.

The perusal of these quotations cannot fail to convince us that the Churches of Gaul received the Apocalypse into their canon; and their testimony is of the greater importance in this inquiry, because these Churches received their articles of faith from the Churches in Asia. The epistle is addressed *to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia*. And there appears to have been another epistle, from the martyrs, with the same address, but on a different subject, written at the same time. The Gallic Churches render account to those of Asia, as colonies to their mother country. They agreed with them in receiving the Apocalypse as of divine authority, otherwise they could not have quoted from it as such. The Church of Lyons had received her vénéralé bishop Pothinus from Asia,<sup>1</sup> who being martyred at the age of ninety years, was succeeded by the Asiatic Irenæus. It is important to impress this fact, *that the Churches, colonized from the Seven Churches in Asia, received the Apocalypse as a divine book.*

MELITO, after some hesitation, is admitted by Michaelis as a witness in favour of the Apocalypse. He is stated to have flourished about the year 170,<sup>2</sup> and might be living at the time the Gallic Epistle was received by the Asiatic Churches, *of one of which (Sardis) he was bishop*. He was a bishop of the highest reputation in the Christian world, according to the testimonies of Polycrates, Tertullian, and Eusebius.<sup>3</sup> He wrote upon the Apocalypse,

<sup>1</sup> Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. Cent. ii. part 1. ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cave, Hist. Lit.

<sup>3</sup> Euseb. lib. iv. c. 26. Hierom. Proleg. 327.



and was esteemed, says Tertullian, a prophet by many Christians.

THEOPHILUS, who was bishop of Antioch about ninety years after the publication of the Apocalypse, appears to have written upon, and to have quoted from it as of divine authority, in his treatise against Hermogenes.<sup>1</sup> This treatise is not extant; but Lardner has produced one passage from another work of his, in which he calls the Devil "*Satan, the Serpent and the Dragon.*" This connexion of names is only to be found in the book of Revelation, (ch. xii. 9. and xx. ii.)<sup>2</sup> Michaelis admits Theophilus among those who undoubtedly received the Apocalypse.<sup>3</sup>

APOLLONIUS is not mentioned by Michaelis: but Eusebius, who speaks of him as a learned man, represents him also as supporting the Apocalypse by testimonies taken from it.<sup>4</sup> He suffered martyrdom about the year 186,<sup>5</sup> and is a valuable addition to our evidence.

CLEMENS OF ALEXANDRIA is admitted by Michaelis as an undoubted evidence for the Apocalypse. He has frequently quoted from it, and referred to it,<sup>6</sup> as the work of an apostle. He was an inquisitive and well-informed writer, and having flourished within the first century after the publication of the Apocalypse, is an important evidence in its favour.

TERTULLIAN wrote about the same time as Clement. Michaelis allows his evidence for the Apocalypse to be *undoubted*; and it is certainly very valuable. He is the most ancient of the Latin

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. H. E. lib. iv. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Lardner, Cred. art. Theophilus.

<sup>3</sup> P. 467.

<sup>4</sup> Euseb. H. E. lib. v. c. 18, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Lardner, art. Apollonius.

<sup>6</sup> P. 467

fathers, whose works have descended to our times. He quotes, or refers to the Apocalypse, in more than seventy passages in his writings, appealing to it expressly as the work of the apostle John. He defends the authenticity of the book against the heretic Marcion and his followers, by asserting its *external evidence*. He appeals to the *Churches of Asia*, and assures us, that “though Marcion rejects it, yet the succession of bishops, traced to its origin, will establish John to be its author.”<sup>1</sup> In particular, it may be observed that he has quoted Rev. i. 6. “Quia sacerdotes nos et Deo et Patri fecit,” as a passage common in the mouths of the laity of his time.<sup>2</sup> This frequent and popular appeal to the Apocalypse, shows it to be a book much read, and generally received in the African Churches.

We are now returned again to the times of Irenæus, whose single testimony appeared to have such deserved influence in settling the question before us. But the retrospect, which we have been enabled to take of the writers who preceded him, has added great weight to the evidence. Testimonies have been drawn abundantly from every generation of writers throughout the first century after the Apocalypse was published; and from almost all parts of the Christian world; from Asia, where it made its first appearance; from Syria; from Italy; from Gaul, and from Africa; where it seems to have had a wider circulation and reception.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Habemus et Johannis alumnas ecclesias; nam etsi Apocalypsin ejus Marcion respuat, ordo tamen episcoporum, ad originem recensens, in Johannem stabit auctorem. Adv. Marcion, lib. iv. c. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Tertull. de Monog. c. 12.

<sup>3</sup> From a passage in Michaelis's Introduction, ch. xxvi. sect. 8, we collect the names of the ancient authors, whose testimony he esteemed most decisive to the authenticity of the books of the New Testament. These are, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen; by all of whom we find the Apocalypse most completely received as the writing of John the Evangelist.

Contemporary with Irenæus, Clemens of Alexandria, and Tertullian, were Hippolitus and Origen; but rather of a later date, so as to belong more properly to the first part of the third century of the Christian æra. We will proceed with them, as completing the essential evidence concerning the claims of the Apocalypse; for after this period, the evidence must depend upon appealing to those writers who have lived nearer to the time of its publication.

But first, we will observe, that during the one hundred years, from the publication of the Apocalypse, which have passed under our examination, wonderful as it may appear, there is not one writer of the pure primitive Church, no father, no ecclesiastical author, who appears to have questioned its authenticity. Yet the fathers, before the times of Caius and Dionysius, could discover the same causes of objection which they afterwards urged, that *it was obscure, and to them no revelation, and not altogether the same Greek as St. John's Gospel*. But such was the weight of its *external evidence*, in these early times, when inquiry would easily trace the book to its author, that although they could not understand the contents of it, they received it, with faith and reverence, and transmitted it, sanctioned by their own names, to posterity. This was the golden age of *external evidence* in relation to the claims of authenticity advanced in favour of any book, pretending to divine inspiration. A silver age followed, and we of these times are under a lower degeneracy, and can only settle our opinions, so far as evidence external is concerned, by a diligent and faithful inquiry into those of the holy fathers of this period.

But the Apocalypse thus cherished by the orthodox members of Christ's Church, was rejected by some heretics: by Marcion, a Gnostic, who, to serve

his unrighteous purposes, rejected, or mutilated other books of sacred Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

It was rejected also by a sect who obtained the name of Alogi, because they rejected also the Gospel of St. John ; but not from any supposed failure of its external evidence, but on account of the *Logos*, or Eternal Word, revealed to us in both of these sacred books.<sup>2</sup>

The arguments used by these heretics to invalidate the claims of the Apocalypse, were current in the times of Hippolitus and Origen, the two remaining witnesses now to be produced, and who will complete an invincible phalanx of external evidence. We shall see what influence they had on the minds of these able divines.<sup>3</sup>

Hippolitus flourished early in the third century, and probably lived and taught during a considerable part of the second ; for he was an instructor of Origen, who was set over the catechetical school in Alexandria in the year 202. He had been the disciple of Irenæus, and probably was a Greek by birth, for he wrote in Greek, and in the eastern parts of the Greek colonies his writings were long held in the highest esteem. He is in all respects as perfect a witness, as the times in which he lived could produce. He received the Apocalypse as the work of *St. John, the apostle and disciple of the Lord*.<sup>4</sup> Michaelis admits his evidence, and attributes to his in-

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian adv. Marcion. Irenæus adv. Hær. Epiphanius, Hær. 42. Origen. cont. Celsum, ii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> An objection to the Apocalypse by these Alogi is attempted to be maintained by Michaelis ; the reader, who may wish to see it, is referred to the Dissertation, with the answer to it, which is believed to be satisfactory.

<sup>3</sup> These arguments rest on *internal evidence*, and will be examined in particular under that head.

<sup>4</sup> See the testimonies collected by Lardner, who says, that the testimony of Hippolitus is so clear in this respect, that no question can be made about it. Cred. G. H. art. Hippolitus.

fluence and writings much support of the Apocalypse.<sup>1</sup> He defended this sacred book from the injurious notions which had been started against it in his days. He endeavoured to explain some parts of it, and to take away a popular objection, by rendering it less obscure.<sup>2</sup> Michaelis is inclined to believe that he left two works on this subject. He says nothing which can tend to invalidate the evidence of Hippolitus, but much to confirm it.

ORIGEN was born in the year 184 or 185, and lived to his 70th year. Of all the ancient Fathers, he is generally allowed to be the most acute, diligent, and learned; and he applied these superior qualifications to the study of the Holy Scriptures. He studied them critically, with all that investigation of their evidences, of the authenticity of the books and of the text, which now form a voluminous part of theological inquiry. He was in a great degree the father of biblical learning. He could not be ignorant of the objections urged by Caius and others against the Apocalypse; and he might be inclined to allow some weight to the popular objection, that it encouraged the Millenarians; for Origen was a decided Anti-millenarian. He appears likewise to have felt the full force of another of their objections: he acknowledged, and was distressed by, the dark veil which appeared to “*envelope* the unspeakable mysteries of the Apocalypse.”<sup>3</sup> But these objections did not induce him to reject the book, or to speak doubtfully of it. He quotes it frequently as “the work of the apostle John, of the author of the Gospel of John, of him who leaned on

<sup>1</sup> P. 478, 479.

<sup>2</sup> What remains of Hippolitus of this kind is to be seen chiefly in the Commentary of Andreas Cæsariensis on the Apocalypse, who professes to have followed him.

<sup>3</sup> See a fragment of Origen, preserved in his works, and quoted by Lardner. Art. Origen.



the bosom of Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> But to what shall we ascribe this decisive conclusion of Origen, so hostile to his own prepossessions? To what, but the irresistible weight of external evidence which existed in his time? No one, who has taken into consideration this evidence, (even as it now appears to us,) and the superior advantages and qualifications of this learned and inquisitive father to judge of it, can ascribe his perfect testimony to any other cause. And every candid person must be surprised and sorry at the cavilling questions of Michaelis,<sup>2</sup> by which he endeavours to represent the well-considered and respectable evidence of Origen, as depending solely on the authority of his master Hippolytus; or (which is still more extraordinary) to be the result of that duplicity, which he attributes (unjustly, as we shall endeavour to prove in its proper place) to Dionysius, the disciple of Origen.

But from other passages in Michaelis's work, it appears, that he felt the force of Origen's testimony respecting the Apocalypse; for he acknowledges it to be “greatly in its favour.”<sup>3</sup> And so it will remain; for the counterpoise to it, suggested by him, as arising from the silence of Papias, has been shown to have very little weight.

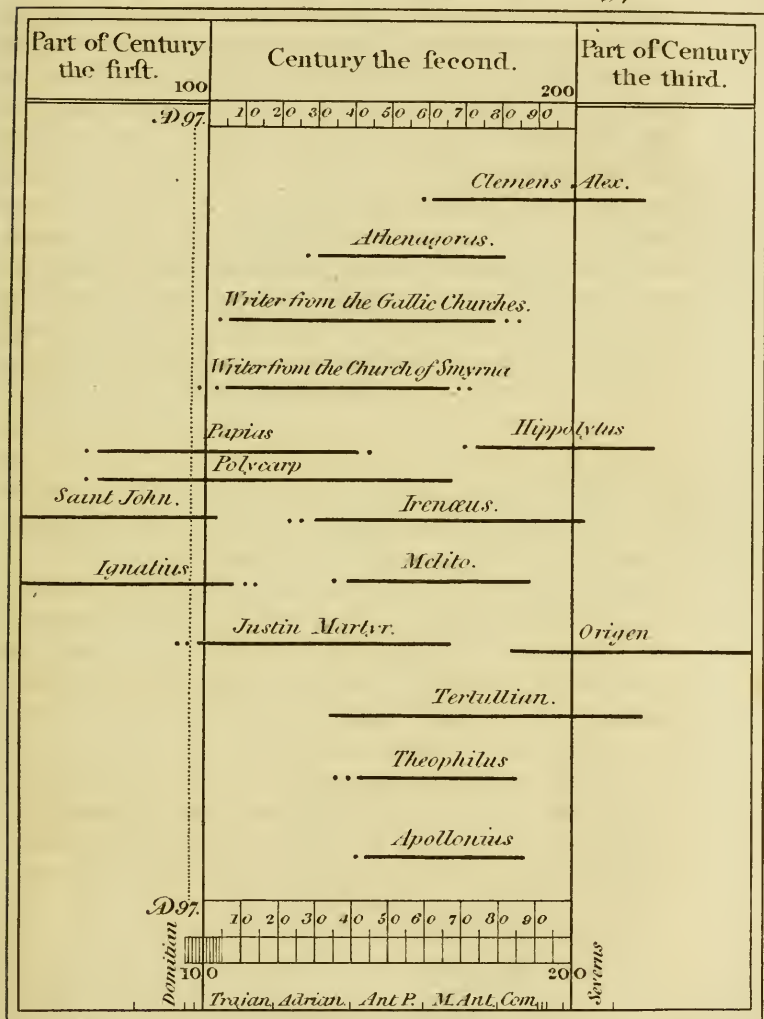
The reader is now requested to peruse the annexed sketch, drawn after the manner of Priestley's biographical chart, and those in Playfair's Chronology; by which he will see, in one view, the writers whose testimonies we have collected. He will hereby be enabled better to estimate the force of that numerous, unbroken, concurring chain of evidence, whose links we have laid before him. The

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. H. E. lib. vi. c. 25. Origen. Hom. in lib. Jer. Com. in Joh. p. 14. Com. in Matt. p. 417. Cont. Cels. lib. vi.

<sup>2</sup> P. 480.

<sup>3</sup> P. 486.

*A Biographical Chart of Writers in the early Christian Church, who appear to have afforded Evidence in favor of the Apocalypse.*



The Dotted line marks the year 97, when the 'Apocalypse' was published. The lines under each Name show the years when the writers lived, to be measured upon the Scale below. When the birth or death of a Writer is uncertain that uncertainty is expressed by Dots, before or after the line.





evidence is abundant,—surprisingly so, considering the mysterious nature of the book. At no time does it depend on any single testimony; many writers testify together; and they are nearly all the great names of ecclesiastical antiquity. To their evidence, no contradictory testimony, of an external kind, was opposed. No one alleged against the Apocalypse such arguments as these: “It is not preserved in the archives of the seven Asiatic Churches:—the oldest persons in those cities have no knowledge of its having been sent thither:—no one ever saw it during the life of John:—it was introduced in such and such a year, but it was contradicted as soon as it appeared.”<sup>1</sup>

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With the witnesses exhibited in the chart, we may fairly conclude our abstracted view of the external evidence for the authenticity of the Apocalypse. By some writers, it has not been thought necessary to pursue it farther, even in relation to the whole canon of the New Testament. Dr. Less, in his *History of Religion*, has closed his evidence with *Origen*; and the learned translator of Michaelis’s Introduction, observes upon it, that “further testimony is *unnecessary*.”<sup>2</sup> In the Dissertation, I thought it proper to proceed further in obviating the arguments of Michaelis, wherever they had a tendency to shake the orthodox opinion concerning the divine

<sup>1</sup> These arguments are candidly and judiciously suggested by Michaelis, and he allows considerable weight to the non-appearance of such, (p. 484.); but, in a note subjoined, he endeavours to invalidate them. The reader, who may wish to see what he has advanced, and the answer to it, is referred to the Dissertation, page 68.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction, vol. i. p. 361. Notes by Dr. Marsh, now Lord Bishop of Peterborough, and Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge.

origin of the Apocalypse : and my progress may be seen in that work.<sup>1</sup> I will now take leave of this division of the subject with stating, that Sir Isaac Newton has truly asserted, that “no other book of the New Testament is so strongly attested, or commented upon, as this.”<sup>2</sup>

## II. OF THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

We now proceed to the *internal* evidence; in the examination of which, we no longer rely on the ancient *external* witnesses, we search the work itself; we try its *interior* marks and character; and determine, by the judgment thence arising, whether it be of divine authority. The inquiry will be twofold. 1st. Whether from the internal form and character of the Apocalypse, it appears to be a book of divine inspiration. 2dly. Whether, appearing to be such, it appears also to have been written by the Apostle John.

1. If all, or indeed most Christians, were agreed upon the same interpretation of the Apocalyptic prophecies, this question might be settled by a short and summary proceeding. It would be only necessary to ask,—have these prophecies been fulfilled? for if it be answered in the affirmative, the consequence immediately follows; the prophet was inspired, and his book is divine.

This criterion, in some future period, when the Apocalyptic prophecies have been more successfully expounded may produce the evidence desired. But

<sup>1</sup> The whole of the seventh chapter in that work may be read to advantage by those who may wish to see the opinions of writers in the times subsequent. Those reported by Eusebius deserve a particular attention.

<sup>2</sup> Sir I. Newton, on Daniel and the Apocalypse, part ii. c. 1. p. 219.

at present, it cannot be applied so as to command general conviction. We must argue from other points, in which a more general agreement is to be obtained ; at the same time it may be observed, that every student of the Apocalypse, who, by a careful examination of many of its prophecies, and a comparison of them with historical events, is convinced that they have been fulfilled, has this important evidence in his own breast. We may proceed therefore to questions of more ready solution, comparing the internal structure of the Apocalypse, the pictures and images it exhibits, the doctrines it holds forth, the language and expressions it uses, with those contained in other writings, acknowledged to be of divine authority.

Michaelis has allowed, that the internal structure of the Apocalypse is “ noble and sublime ;” that “ the imitation of the ancient prophets is, for the most part, more beautiful and magnificent than the original ; more short, more abounding in picturesque beauties.”<sup>1</sup> Whilst I agree with him generally in this decision, I would point out that such a superiority is seldom, if ever, to be seen in an *imitation* ; nor can it be accounted for in this case, from the superior art or ability of the writer ; for in him there is plainly no aim at eloquence : he drew simply, nay with rude lines, from the heavenly objects before him. They were frequently the same objects from which other sacred prophets had taken their pictures, but they were presented before the writer of the Apocalypse in a grander attitude and appearance, by his divine conductor. For although a close comparison of the Apocalypse with other sacred Scriptures, will show a perfect agreement in the presentation of the same original ideas and ob-

<sup>1</sup> P. 533, 534.

jects of imagery, yet there will be found that variation which is to be expected, that *concordia discors*, which we see in the production of artists, copying from the same object, but under different lights and positions. This may be illustrated by comparing together the seraphin of Isaiah, the cherubim of Ezekiel, and the living creatures of the Apocalypse. (See Rev. iv. 6, 7, 8.)

Michaelis speaks in high terms of the beautifully sublime and animating manner in which the Apocalypse is written. But in what does this extraordinary grandeur and pathos consist? Not in the *language*, as he seems to imagine; for the evidence he brings to confirm this notion, goes directly to contradict and refute it. “The Apocalypse,” says he, “is beautiful and sublime, &c. not only in the original, but in every, even the worst *translation* of it.”<sup>1</sup> But beauty, which consists in language only, is known to vanish with the language in which it was written, and in translation is very seldom preserved. But there is another kind of beauty and of sublimity, which even a bad translation may in some measure convey; and excellence in writing, which can stand this trial, is found to consist not in language, but in ideas and imagery. These, in the Apocalypse, are so simple, so grand, so truly sublime, that rudely represented in any language, they cannot fail to elevate, to alarm, or to delight. This prophetic book can boast indeed no beauty of diction, so far as respects mere language; and there is no book that will lose less by being translated. But this pure and simple sublimity, independent of the dress of human art, and to be found perhaps only in the sacred Scriptures—whence was it derived to this book? which, on this account, must be pronounced

<sup>2</sup> P. 533; and again, ch. iv. sect. 3. p. 112.



to be either an heavenly production, like the other divine writings, or such an imitation, such a forgery, as the Christians of that time were not likely, not able to produce. For there has been observed to be a very unequal gradation and descent, in point of pure simple eloquence and unsullied doctrine, from the apostles to the fathers of the Church. And this circumstance has been used to show, that the books of the New Testament are of superior origin, and could not be fabricated by those Fathers, or in those times.<sup>1</sup> The same argument applies to the origin of the Apocalypse, and with more force and effect. “Whence,” we may ask, almost in the words of Scripture, “whence hath this book these things? what wisdom is this which is given unto it?”<sup>2</sup>

In the word of God there is a grandeur and majesty independent of the accidents of language, consisting in the greatness and sublimity of the things revealed. Men of genius may catch some sparks of this heavenly fire; they may imitate it with some success; but no one is found so confident in this kind of strength, as to neglect the arts of composition. Mahomet was a man of superior genius; in writing his pretended revelation, he borrowed much from the sacred Scriptures; he attempted often, in imitation of them, to be simply sublime; but he did not trust to this solely, he endeavoured to adorn his work with the imposing charms of human eloquence and cultivated language; and he appealed to the perfection of his compositions for a proof of their divine original. Such an appeal would have little served his cause in a critical and enlightened age, which would have required far other internal proofs of divinity, than those which result from elegant diction. The learned of such an age would reject a prophet

<sup>1</sup> By Le Clerc, and by Jortin. Eccl. Hist.

<sup>2</sup> Mark vi. 2.

appealing to a proof which has never been admitted, in respect to former revelations; a prophet who, both in doctrine and imagery, is seen to contradict, or add strange conceits to, the credible and well-attested revelations of foregoing ages.

There is nothing of this kind in the Apocalypse: compare its prophecies with those known to be forged;<sup>1</sup> these, if they amaze, as appearing to have been fulfilled, are found to have been written after the events foretold. But no one can show that the Apocalypse contains prophecies fulfilled before they were written.

We have accounts in Ecclesiastical History of several Apocalypses or revelations beside this of St. John; of St. Peter, of St. Paul, of St. Thomas, of St. Stephen.<sup>2</sup> Will these bear any comparison with the Apocalypse of holy Scripture? Let Michaelis speak of them; for he knew perfectly all that remains of them, and what the ancients have said concerning those that have perished. “The spurious productions of those ages,” (he speaks of the two first centuries,) “which were sent into the world under the name of apostles, are, for the most part, very unhappy imitations, and discover evident marks that they were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed.”<sup>3</sup>

Fragments of these may be seen in the Codex Apocryph. of Fabricius, in Grabe’s Spicilegium, and in Jones’s Canon of the New Testament, and may be compared with the simple scriptural dignity of our Apocalypse. The Fathers of the Church compared them at length, and rejected all, but this ac-

<sup>1</sup> The Sibylline Oracle, the testaments of the twelve Patriarchs, &c.; to which we may add, Virgil’s Anchises in the Elysian Fields, Gray’s Bard, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Euseb. H. E. lib. iii. c. 3, 25; vi. c. 14. Gelasius de Lib. Apocryph.

<sup>3</sup> Introduction to N. T. vol. iv. ch. 28, sect. i. p. 349.

knowledge of St. John ; and this they guarded with so sedulous a care, as to preserve it in the main from interpolations, while the genuine productions of apostolical men, of Ignatius, Polycarp, &c. are known to have suffered from the touch of profane pens.

Two works of ecclesiastical writers of the first or second century, still preserved, and in some degree venerated by our Church or its members, may be compared with the Apocalypse. They are the rivals which come nearest to it, *proximi, longo intervallo*. I mean the visions of Hermas, and of the apocryphal Esdras. The former contains the relation of some dreams, which the writer may possibly have believed to be inspired, or may have invented as useful allegory. The imagery of this book is borrowed from Scripture, but in a style of servile imitation, which does not indicate any communication of an original vision. There is nothing to make “our hearts burn within us,” as we read. The preceptive and doctrinal parts are simple and moral, and were therefore used in the ancient Church to initiate youth into religion.<sup>1</sup> But although such an use of the book could not fail to spread a prejudice in its favour, it does not appear to have been received by the ancients as a divine work ; at least it was so received by very few.<sup>2</sup>

The second book of Esdras, though preserved by our Church among those which may be read “for instruction, but not to establish doctrine,”<sup>3</sup> is nevertheless convicted of evident forgery. The author has assumed a name, and an age, to which he had no

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius H. E. lib. iii. c. 3.

<sup>2</sup> See Leland’s Cred. Gosp. art. Hermas ; and also vol. viii. 98 ; xii. 158 ; where he speaks with much learned information on the apocryphal books of the New Testament.

<sup>3</sup> Articles of Religion, art. vi.



title; and such of his prophecies as appear fulfilled, were evidently written after the events foretold. He has otherwise a greater dignity than Hermas, and more successfully imitates the sacred prophets. He has made much use of the Apocalyptic prophecies.<sup>1</sup>

These observations may suffice to defend the Apocalypse from the objections raised by Michaelis and others against the *internal structure* of the book. We will proceed to consider the *doctrines* delivered in it.

The DOCTRINES of the Christian Religion are by no means a principal object of the Apocalypse, they occur only incidentally: but it may be safely affirmed, that no doctrines are therein advanced, which are in any degree at variance with those of the New Testament. Michaelis entirely acquits the Apocalypse of the general and unfounded charge against it advanced by Luther, “that Christ is not taught in it;” but we must be sorry, on his account, to see that he afterwards attempts to qualify this just concession, by asserting that “the true and eternal Godhead of Christ is certainly not taught so clearly in the Apocalypse as in St. John’s Gospel.”<sup>2</sup> Could he expect so clear a doctrinal exposition from a book of prophecies relating to future events, as from that Gospel which the ancients have considered as written principally to set forth the divine nature of Christ? But this divine nature is also set forth in the Apocalypse; and as clearly as the nature of the book and prophetic symbols can express it. He is described as sitting on the throne of his Father’s glory, “in the midst” of that throne, far beyond the cherubim, above all principalities and powers; and all the heavenly inhabitants are represented as falling prostrate before him with *worship* as to their God.<sup>3</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> See a learned and judicious Account of this book in Gray’s valuable Key to the Old Testament.

<sup>2</sup> Page 538.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. iii. 21. v. 6. ad fin.

this is exhibited in a book which has expressly forbidden the worship of angels.<sup>1</sup> But, lest symbols should not carry sufficient expression in them, words unequivocal are thus added. He is called (and nowhere else in Scripture, but in St. John's writings,) the *Word of God*,<sup>2</sup> which, notwithstanding all that has been advanced to lower the meaning of the expression, can be understood only in the same sense as the same words in the Gospel to which indeed it evidently refers. The primitive Christians understood it in this sense; and because it was understood by them in no other, the Alogi rejected the Apocalypse, for the same reason as they rejected the Gospel of St. John.<sup>3</sup>

Our Lord also describes himself in the Apocalypse, as the "Alpha and Omega," the first and the last; which expression cannot be understood otherwise than as forcibly denoting the eternity of Christ's divine nature, which "in the beginning," as St. John says, "was with God, and was God"—the original Creator and final Judge of the world.<sup>4</sup> The Apocalypse and the Gospel, so far as relates to this doctrine, are the same, and must stand or fall together.

With the same view of supporting his argument, Michaelis has represented the dignity of Christ as lessened in the Apocalypse, because he happens to be mentioned *after* the seven spirits, which this interpreter supposes to represent seven angels. But there is no such diminution of Christ's dignity; no, not even if the spirits should prove to be angels; because the seven spirits *stand before* the throne, but Christ has *his seat upon it, and in the midst of it*. They are represented as standing in the presence of the throne, before he enters to take his seat there.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xxii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xix. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Epiphanius, Hær. 51.

<sup>4</sup> John i. 1—3.

And if the Son of God is mentioned last in order, it is only to dwell longer on his heavenly glories, which occupy four verses in the description, whereas the seven spirits are only named.

There is one passage in the Apocalypse which, from having been literally and improperly interpreted, has given offence to some pious Christians in all ages of the Church, as introducing doctrines subversive of gospel purity. It is in the twentieth chapter, where the servants of Christ are described as raised from the dead, to reign with him a thousand years. But this is not a *doctrine*, but a *prophecy*, delivered in a figurative style, and as yet unfulfilled. Such a prophecy no judicious person will attempt to explain otherwise than in very general terms: much less will he derive from it any doctrine contrary to, or inconsistent with the acknowledged word of God. We are not to argue from the abuse of such a prophecy by ignorant fanatics, against the use of it, which will be apparent in its due time. The extravagant notions of the Chiliasts are no more to be taken as evidence against the Apocalypse, than the inventions of transubstantiation and purgatory in the dark ages, are to be received as objections to the pure Gospel.

Other places which are objected to by Michaelis in his section of “the Doctrine of the Apocalypse,” will be found to contain no doctrines, but figurative representations of future events, which he appears to have misconceived.

We will pass on to consider an objection to the Apocalypse, preferred against it in early times, and repeated to this day—*the obscurity of the book*. Michaelis frequently urges it.<sup>1</sup>

To this general charge of obscurity, a general

<sup>1</sup> P 459, 502, 503, 511.

answer may be given. How can you expect a long series of prophecies, extending from the apostolical age to the grand consummation of all things, to be otherwise than obscure? It is the nature of such prophecy to give but an imperfect light,<sup>1</sup> even in the case of prophecies fulfilled; because the language is symbolical, which, though governed by certain rules attainable by the judicious among the learned, is nevertheless very liable to misconstruction in rash and unskilful hands.<sup>2</sup> But prophecies unfulfilled, are necessarily involved in deeper darkness, because the *event* to be compared with the prophecy is wanting; and until this arrives in the lapse of time, it is *designedly* obscure: “For God gave such predictions, not to gratify men’s curiosity, by enabling them to foreknow things; but that after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the *event*, and his own providence, not that of the interpreter, be then manifested thereby to the world.”<sup>3</sup>

This same objection of *obscurity*, will operate as forcibly against many other prophecies of the Old and New Testament: those which appertain to the *latter days*. The book of Daniel, which has our Lord’s seal to it, must be rejected with the Apocalypse, if it be a sufficient objection that it is yet in many places obscure.

The Jewish Sanhedrim doubted at one time whether they should not reject the book of Ezekiel from the canon of Scripture; and one principal argument for the measure was, *the obscurity of the book*. (Calmet’s Dissert. vol. ii. p. 369.) Sir I. Newton argues otherwise concerning the obscurity of the Apocalypse. He says, “It is a part of this pro-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12; 2 Pet. i. 19.

<sup>2</sup> See this explained in Bp. Louth’s Prelections, p. 69, 70; and in Bp. Hurd’s Sermons on Prophecy.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Isaac Newton on Daniel and the Apocalypse, 4to. p. 251.

phesy, that it should not be understood before the last age of the world ; and therefore it makes for the credit of the prophecy, that it is not yet understood." (Ch. i. p. 251.)

There can be no doubt now, with those who have studied the best commentators, that a very great portion of the apocalyptic prophecies have been proved true, by their corresponding events in history. Additional light is slowly, but clearly coming forth. And the prophecies now obscured in the depths of time, will to future generations become " a shining light ;" and when rendered clear by their respective completions, they will form all together an impregnable bulwark against infidelity and impiety.

In the mean time, we may console ourselves for the ignorance which yet remains, by observing, that difficulties are found in the abstruser parts of every kind of speculative knowledge. Every study has its dark recesses, hitherto impenetrable by human wit or industry. These prophecies are among the deeper speculations of divine knowledge. And are we to wonder, that *man* meets with difficulties here? *man*, whose bold, prying insolence is checked in the paths of every art and science, by the incomprehensible greatness and sublimity of the works of God !

Having taken this short, but comprehensive view of the evidence, both external and internal, by which the claims of the Apocalypse to a divine origin are supported or denied, we may, it is trusted, fairly conclude, that it is in every respect entitled to the place which it holds in our canon of Holy Scripture.

II. We may now proceed to the second and last subject of our proposed inquiry—*Whether the Apocalypse, having thus appeared to be a book of divine in-*



*spiration, will appear also to have been written by John, the Apostle and Evangelist?*

We have already seen it expressly declared to be such by unexceptionable witnesses, who lived in, or near to, the times when it was first received by the seven Churches; who had ample means of information; and were interested to know from whom the Churches had received it. Such were Justin Martyr, Irenæus the disciple of Polycarp, Tertullian, Origen, and others who preceded them. This external evidence appeared of such preponderating weight to the candid and judicious Lardner, (who entertained no prejudice in favour of the Apocalypse, which he appears to have very little studied or understood,) <sup>1</sup> as to have drawn from him this conclusion, twice repeated: “It may be questioned, whether the exceptions founded on the difference of style, and such like things, or any other criticisms, whatever, can be sufficient to create a doubt concerning the author of this book, which was owned for a writing of John, the Apostle and Evangelist, before the times of Dionysius and Caius, and, so far as we know, before the most early of those who disputed its genuineness.” <sup>2</sup>

These exceptions and criticisms arose in the third century, and are detailed in the writings of Dionysius of Alexandria, and by him placed in so strong a light, that little has been added to them by subsequent critics. Lardner has reduced them to five heads, under which we may now present them before the reader, with some short account of the answers made to them, and some additional observations.

1. “*The Evangelist John has not named himself in*

<sup>1</sup> Supplement, vol. iii. p. 372.

<sup>2</sup> Cred. Gosp. Hist. vol. iv. p. 733. Supplement, vol. iii. p. 364.



*his Gospel, nor his Catholic Epistle; but the writer of the Revelation nameth himself more than once."*

If St. John had named himself as author of his Gospel, he would have done what no other evangelist before him had done. But he has done what amounts to nearly the same thing, and which we do not find in the other Gospels; he has plainly disclosed, by various circumlocutions, that he, "the beloved disciple," was the writer of it.<sup>1</sup> It has been as well known, and acknowledged as his production, through all the Christian era, as if he had stamped it with his name.

In his two short Epistles he has not named himself *John*. But he has used an appellation which, in a letter to a private individual, would equally ascertain the writer. He calls himself *the elder*, the elder of the Christian Church, the aged survivor of all his apostolic brethren.

But what shall we say to the omission of his name in the book called his *first Epistle*? Michaelis himself shall assist us to clear up this difficulty. By very just and probable arguments he contends, that it is "*a treatise rather than Epistle*," not having the name of the writer in the beginning, nor the usual salutations at the end.<sup>2</sup> In a composition of this form, the name of the writer was not necessary; but in the Apocalypse, which is written in the epistolary form—not to any individual—but to the seven Churches in Asia, and which he was commanded to write, and to address to them, he could not omit to prefix his name.<sup>3</sup> The objection therefore, under this first head, cannot be maintained.

## 2. The second is, that "*though the writer of the*

<sup>1</sup> John xxi. 20, &c.; xix. 26.; xiii. 23, &c.

<sup>2</sup> On the 1st. Epist. of St. John, vol. iv. ch. xxx. sect. ii. p. 400.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. i. 11.

*Revelation calls himself John, he has not shown that he is the apostle of that name."*

In answer to this, it will be sufficient to show, that such an addition to the name of John was, under the circumstances of the case, totally unnecessary. He wrote to the seven Churches, and from Patmos, in which island he says, that he "is suffering tribulation for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." All the Churches knew that he was then suffering banishment in that island, and they knew the cause of it as assigned by him. An epistle, containing the history of a heavenly vision, seen by *John* in the island of Patmos, needed no other addition. What John would take upon himself to write *John alone*, without epithet or explanation, but John the apostle, and president over all the Churches? A person less known might have described himself by the addition of his father's name, as was the custom of the ancients. A bishop or presbyter might have signified his office or station in the Church. A fabricator of a revelation, intended to pass under the authority of our apostle, would probably have added to his name "an apostle of Jesus Christ," or by some circumlocution, like those of the Gospel, expressed it. The circumstances under which St. John wrote required no such designation. And the simplicity of his address is a confirmation, to be added to the multitude of prevailing evidence, which supports the authenticity of his work.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, in the opening of his Epistles, has used generally, not always, the term *apostle*. With him it was more necessary than with St. John, who was a leading member of the twelve. St. Paul's right to this title was not so publicly established, and was doubted by some, which induces him to say (1 Cor. ix. 1.) "Am not I an apostle?" &c. But St. John's apostolic authority was undoubted, and peculiarly so by those to whom he addressed his Apocalypse. To his name *John* he therefore adds an humbler description, more

3. The third objection is, that “*the Revelation does not mention the Catholic Epistle, nor the Catholic Epistle the Revelation.*”

This objection Lardner has pronounced to be “of little moment.” Michaelis seems to have thought so, for he has not noted it. If the reader should think that there is any weight in it, he must be referred to the answer given by Lardner.<sup>1</sup>

4. Fourthly, it is objected, that “*there is a great agreement in sentiment, expression, and manner, between St. John’s Gospel and Epistle; but the Revelation is quite different in all these respects, without any resemblance or similitude.*”

This is the most formidable objection that has been produced. The answers given to it either deny the fact, or maintain that the difference is to be accounted for in the difference of style which belongs to a prophetic work.

These answers take only a *general* view of the question. In my Dissertation I felt it necessary to enter more particularly into it. I there remarked, that the sentiments, the notions, and images presented in the book, are, in very few passages, those of *the writer*, (such, I mean, as had been formed and digested in, and thus arose out of his own mind,) but of that holy Spirit, or of those heavenly inhabitants, who expressed them to him by symbols, or declared them in speech. The pen of St. John merely narrates, and frequently in the very words of the heavenly minister. “That which he sees and hears” he writes, as he is commanded to do, (ch. i.

tenderly affecting his Christian flock, then suffering persecution—“a brother and companion in tribulation.” So St. James, although an acknowledged apostle, mentions himself only as “a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (James i. 1.)

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iv. p. 707.

19,) but they are not his own ideas from which he writes; he relates simply, and, with little or no comment, the heavenly visions he had beheld, or the words which he had heard. Even in those parts of the book, where we should expect to meet with the original sentiments of the writer, we perceive his mind teeming (as indeed was natural) with the newly-acquired images. He uses such at the very outset of the work, even in his epistolary address, which is full of those images which had been exhibited to him in the visions. The same thing occurs again at the close of his book; and indeed, it is difficult to find many passages wherein the writer has recourse to his *own* sentiments, and previous store of imagery.

The whole of the second and third chapters, and a great part of the first, is delivered in our Lord's *own* words, and contains *his* sentiments, *his* doctrines, not those of the writer, who is commanded to write down the words of the great Visitor of the Churches. We have indeed other words of our Lord, written by St. John in his Gospel, with which it may be thought that these words in the Apocalypse may be properly compared. But it must be remembered, that the character and office which our Lord is seen to assume in the Apocalypse, is very different from that which he had borne in the Gospel. He is now no longer the "Son of Man" upon earth, the condescending companion and instructor of his disciples, but the glorified King of Heaven, the omniscient Visitor of his Church, the omnipotent Judge of the world.<sup>1</sup> And in the remaining

<sup>1</sup> We are to expect this difference of character and appearance, if we advert to similar circumstances exhibited in the Gospels. After our Lord's resurrection, his appearance before his disciples was accompanied with so superior a sublimity in look and manner, that they could not immediately acknowledge him. See the last chapter of St. Luke, and the two last of St. John.

parts of the book, what does the writer present to us? Not his own thoughts and conceptions, but “the things which shall be hereafter,” the symbols and figurative resemblances of future events; and when he uses explanation, it is in the words of his heavenly conductors.

If any passage can be pointed out, wherein he forsakes his apocalyptic ideas, and reassumes his own, it may perhaps be ch. i. verse 7; and it is remarkable that he is here led to quote from Zech. xii. 10, and in the very manner which has been observed by the critics to be peculiar to St. John. Michaelis has noted these peculiar circumstances, and allowed to them considerable weight; <sup>1</sup> but he was not aware, that this is one of very few passages which can properly be compared with the former writings of St. John, so as to deduce evidence of the authenticity of the work.

But although, from the reasons now assigned, we may think it improper to look for any nice resemblance in sentiments and ideas, between the Apocalypse and other writings of St. John, yet some similarity in the mode and character of narration, may perhaps be reasonably expected; and this will be seen in the plain, unadorned simplicity with which the Apocalypse is written.

There is at the same time a difference, which seems to consist chiefly in that circumstance which Jortin has pointed out, that “the Apocalypse, like the Septuagint, follows the Hebrew phraseology, using copulatives continually; whereas the Gospel, instead of *και*, uses *δε*, or *συ*, or is written *ασυνδεδεως*.” <sup>2</sup> But some passages in the Gospel may be seen, where the copulative *και* is used almost as profusely

<sup>1</sup> P. 535. Note.

Discourse on the Christian Religion. *και ειπεν ο Οφης, και, &c.*



as in the Apocalypse. They are those wherein the mind of the writer appears charged with surprising ideas, following each other in rapid succession; and, as he pours them forth, he couples them together with the conjunction. In the fifth chapter of his Gospel, this Evangelist describes a poor cripple, who for thirty-eight years had been in vain expecting a cure from the waters of Bethesda. The circumstances are related calmly, without any extraordinary use of the copulative *και*, till we come to verse the ninth; when the cure having been pronounced by our Lord, the surprising events follow in rapid succession, and the copulative is employed incessantly. *Και ευθεως εγενετο υγιης ο Ανθρωπος, και ηρε τον κραββατον αυτου, και περιπατει.* Thus also at the raising of Lazarus, all proceeds calmly, and without the copulatives, until the great event; but this is narrated (ver. 44.) with *και* repeatedly.

If this be admitted, it may serve to show, that this copulative style, being the language used by St. John when wonderful scenes are related by him, we ought rather to expect it in the Apocalypse, where every scene is full of wonder and amazement.

We have no information from the ancients, in what language the Apocalypse was *originally* written. It might be, as St. Matthew's Gospel is said to be, in Hebrew. Certainly the divine Saviour, when he appeared to St. Paul at his conversion, spoke to him in "the Hebrew tongue."<sup>1</sup> And he, and the angels after him, may have used the same language to St. John; and this, translated into Greek, with the literal care required for such purpose, would produce the very kind of Greek which we now read in the Apocalypse.

These observations may be considered as entitled to but little weight. But let us advert to the objec-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 14.



tions themselves : of what weight and authority are they ? They consist only of doubts, which sprang up one hundred and fifty years after the Apocalypse had been published ; during all which time it was universally received by the Church as the work of the apostle John. The fathers who had personal access to this apostle upon his return to Ephesus, and those who followed them in succession, had the most undeniable means of settling this question. They were satisfied ; and on such a point, it is in vain for the writers of the third century to urge their doubts, and for the German sceptics of our times to renew them.

5. The same general answer may be given to the fifth objection, "That the Gospel of St. John is elegant Greek, but that the Apocalypse abounds with barbarisms and solecisms." And in particular it may be observed, that the attention of modern critics has tended greatly to lessen the force of what is here advanced. For such irregularities of grammar, as are here objected against the Apocalypse, are observed also in the Septuagint, and in other books of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> To vindicate them is unnecessary. The Holy Scriptures must be allowed to speak a language of their own, "not with the enticing words of man's wisdom."<sup>2</sup> They use for the most part an Asiatic Greek, plentifully mixed with Hebraisms. A pure Attic phraseology would not give them greater credibility ; for in these days we should not admit the plea of Mahomet, and conclude them divine, because elegantly composed. Many of the expressions, which, upon this ground,

<sup>1</sup> See Michaelis, p. 530. And Blackwall, in his *Sacred Classics*, where attempting to vindicate St. John from this charge, in his Gospels and Epistles he has been obliged to examine above forty passages, in some of which only he has been successful.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 4.

have been objected to in the Apocalypse, have been shown to convey the sublime meaning of the sacred writer more forcibly and effectually than a more grammatical language would have done. Of this character is *απο ὧν, καὶ ὅν, καὶ ὁ ἐρχομενος*, which, corrected into grammar, would not express with equal force that sublime attribute of the Deity by which he fills eternity.<sup>1</sup>

Having now advanced what I deem necessary in answer to these objections of Dionysius, repeated by Michaelis, I shall add a few words concerning another objection of later date, which, though not formally avowed, is indirectly sanctioned by this learned critic.

He distinguishes between *John the Evangelist* and *John the Divine*, as if he believed them two separate persons; and the latter to be the author, or reputed author of the Apocalypse. This mistake has arisen from the title prefixed to the book, “*The Revelation of John the Divine*.” But this is not its title in the most ancient and authentic manuscripts, and is therefore rejected by Griesbach in his editions. The true title of the book is to be seen in the first verses of it: it is, “the Revelation of Jesus Christ,” not of John, but given to John by him. “The Apocalypse of John” was the title by which it was known in the times of Dionysius;<sup>2</sup> and this was to distinguish it from many other Revelations which were then extant, written in imitation of this, and falsely ascribed to other apostles. In the following century, when many contests had arisen concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Orthodox had found their firm support in the writings of this apostle, who alone

<sup>1</sup> This is observed by Michaelis, who says: “The very faults of grammar in the Apocalypse are so happily placed, as to produce an agreeable effect.”—Introd. vol. i. part 1. chap. iv. sect. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Euseb. H. E. lib. vii. c. 24.

of the sacred writers had described the Son of God as Θεὸς λόγος, they began to apply to this apostle the title of Theologos, a title expressive both of St. John's doctrine, and of his eminent knowledge in divine subjects. Athanasius calls St. John ὁ Θεολογος Ἄνθρωπος.<sup>1</sup>

In the decrees of the Council held at Ephesus in 431, that city is mentioned as the burial place of *John the Theologus*, which agrees with the accounts in ecclesiastical history, that *John the Evangelist* was buried there.<sup>2</sup> Andreas Cæsariensis, in commenting on the Apocalypse, (ch. 17,) quotes the Evangelist John by the title of Theologus; and again in ch. iii. 21, and likewise in 1 John, v. 8; and it is applied to him as ὁ Θεολογος κατ' ἐξοχην, *the Divine*; for other able defenders of the theologic doctrine have been sometimes so called. We may therefore be assured, that *John the Divine*, whenever it was prefixed as a title to the Apocalypse, was intended to designate the same person as *John the Evangelist*.

To the evidence here collected, I have added in my Dissertation one of a more positive kind, taken from the book itself.

⌘ In chap. i. 13. He who is ordered to write the Apocalypse, beholds in the vision “one *like* unto the Son of Man.” Now, who but an eye-witness of our Lord's personal appearance upon earth, could pronounce from *the likeness* that it was *He*? St. John had lived familiarly with “the Son of Man” during

<sup>1</sup> See the word Θεολογία, as used in Eusebius, H. E. lib. viii. c. 24, and applied to the beginning of St. John's Gospel. The Christians are described as worshipping Christ, with reference to this name.—Euseb. H. E. lib. v. c. 28. And the *Alogi*, as we have seen, received that appellation, by denying the doctrine of St. John, τὸν ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντα Θεόν (Θεοῦ) λόγον. Epiphani. Hær. 54. Eusebius, quoting the beginning of St. John's Gospel, says, ὡς πη θεολογεῖ. Præp. Evang. lib. xi. c. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Euseb. H. E. lib. iii. c. 1. 20.

his abode upon earth ; and had moreover seen him in his *glorified appearance*, both at his transfiguration and after his resurrection. No other John had enjoyed these privileges ; no other witness of our Lord's person appears to have been living when the apocalyptic visions were seen.

The candid reader will perhaps now think, that to an impregnable force of external evidence in favour of the Apocalypse, a considerable accession of internal evidence may be added ; or, at least, that this avenue, by which its overthrow was attempted in the third century, and renewed in the eighteenth, is not so unguarded as its adversaries have imagined ; and the future labours of judicious commentators will be constantly increasing the weight of this evidence ; for every prediction of this prophetic book, which shall be shown to be clearly accomplished, will afford fresh internal proof of its divine original.

We will conclude with examining the pretensions of the Apocalypse, (as set forth in this short treatise,) by the rules laid down *by Michaelis himself*, to determine whether a scriptural book be authentic or spurious.<sup>1</sup>

1. Were doubts entertained, from its first appearance in the world, whether it proceeded from the pen of St. John ?

No such doubts are recorded, in the history of the true Church, during one hundred years after its publication ; all the ecclesiastical writers, who speak of its author, attribute it to St. John.

2. Did the friends or disciples of the supposed author deny it to be his ?

<sup>1</sup> Introduct. to New Test. chap. ii. sect. 3. p. 27, &c.

There is no such denial from Polycarp, Papias, Ignatius, &c., who appear to have received it as divine Scripture.

3. Did a long series of years elapse after the death of St. John, in which the book was unknown, and in which it must unavoidably have been mentioned and quoted, had it really existed?

No such period did elapse. Michaelis himself has allowed, that this book existed before the year 120, that is, within twenty-three years of the time of its publication. But even in this short interval, it seems probable that it was quoted or alluded to by the apostolic fathers.

4. Is the style of the Apocalypse different from that of St. John in his other writings?

It cannot be denied that there is some difference; but this difference is reasonably accounted for.

5. Are events recorded, which happened later than the time of St. John?

None such are recorded; nor, we may add, are any predicted, which occurred before the time when the book was written, which is a case frequent in pretended predictions.

6. Are opinions advanced in the Apocalypse, which contradict those which St. John is known to have maintained in his other writings?

The theological opinions which it contains are found to be precisely the same with those of St. John in his other writings; and the wild opinions of the Chiliasts, though they may have had their origin from a passage of prophecy in this book, can be attributed only to the rash interpretation of it by these visionaries.

Thus, bringing this prophetic book to the test proposed by Michaelis, the most formidable oppo-

ment of its claims to a divine origin, we shall be obliged to confess its indubitable right to that place in the canon of sacred scripture, which the ancient fathers of the Church assigned to it, and which the reformers in the Protestant Churches have with mature deliberation confirmed.





# NOTES ON THE APOCALYPSE,

OR,

REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

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The text of the original, according to our English authorized translation, is divided into Parts and Sections, with a view to a more complete arrangement and illustration of the Prophecies.



## PART I.

## SECTION I.

*The Title, or Inscription, of the Book.*

## CHAP. i. ver. 1—3.

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John;

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

THE greater part of the commentators have either entirely disregarded, or very little noticed the three first chapters. In these, as the production of a divine interpreter, I expected to find such specimens of the symbols and language of the Apocalypse, as might materially lead to the interpretation of the remainder. I studied them accordingly, as the means of obtaining a safe *Clavis Apocalyptica*, and was not disappointed.

Ver. 1. *The Revelation.*] The word ἀποκαλύψις, although without the prepositive article, is not improperly translated *THE Revelation*; because the titles of books, in the Greek language, are commonly expressed without the article.—See Bishop MIDDLETON on the Greek Article, Luke i. 1.

*Things which must shortly come to pass.*] The

meaning of this cannot be, that the events foretold in this revelation, should all of them be completed within a short time and compass; for we know that more than seventeen hundred years have passed away since this prophecy was delivered, and that as yet only a small part of it is fulfilled. It may also be observed, that the same words, *ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν ταχεί*, are repeated at the close of the work, (ch. xxii. 6.) with reference to a new heaven and new earth, after this world has passed away. The meaning, therefore, seems to be, (as set forth by able commentators, Grotius, Vitringa, Mede, and Daubuz,) that the events predicted shall *begin* to take place soon, and follow each other in regular succession, till the time of the end. But in this, and such like expressions, which occur frequently in scripture, a warning seems to be addressed to every human creature *individually*, that the great day of consummation is at hand. For whatever may be its distance, measured by time and years, it presses close upon every individual; the day of whose death will bring him before his Judge. “Behold I come *quickly*, *ἐν ταχεί*, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be,” (ch. xxii. 12, 20;) and accordingly, in the third verse of this first chapter, the blessing is pronounced upon, and the warning addressed to, *individuals*. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein;<sup>1</sup> for the time is at hand;” that time, when the Son of God, having obtained the victory over his opponents, and finally subdued our last enemy, Death, shall come in the clouds of heaven, as represented in the seventh verse of this chapter, to pass final sentence upon all men.

<sup>1</sup> Not the *words*, as in our received translation, but the *things* commanded, *τα γεγραμμένα*.

## PART I.

## SECTION II.

*The Address, or Salutation, and the Doxology.*

## CHAP. i. ver. 4—8.

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia : Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne :

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father : to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Ver. 4. *John to the seven Churches which are in Asia.*] This book being written in an epistolary form, begins, like other apostolic epistles, with a Salutation, followed by a Doxology. It is addressed to the seven Churches in Asia, that is, the Lydian or Proconsular Asia, which at that time is said to have contained five hundred great cities. Of these, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos, three of the seven, contended for the pre-eminence. All the seven were cities of great account, even in Roman estimation ; but they seem selected by the Holy Spirit with a view to their Christian distinction. (Vitringa.)



Here we meet for the first time with the mention of the number *seven*, which is afterwards so frequently and symbolically used in this sacred book ; wherein we read of *seven* Spirits of God, *seven* angels, *seven* seals, *seven* trumpets, *seven* vials, *seven* heads of the Dragon and of the Beast. In which passages, for the most part, as in others of holy scripture, this number appears to represent a large, complete, yet undefined quantity. Hannah, in her Song, (1 Sam. ii. 5,) says, “ the barren hath borne *seven* (that is, a large but indefinite number of) children.” So, God threatens that he will punish the Israelites *seven* times, that is, very completely and severely. In the Hebrew etymology of this word *seven*, it signifies fulness and perfection. (Daubuz.) Philo styles it *Τελεσφορος*, the completing number ; and it is mentioned as such by Cyprian. With the Israelites this number became thus important, because God, having completed his work of creation in six days, and added thereto the seventh, a day of rest, commanded them in memorial thereof, to reckon time by *sevens*. Through the nations of the East, this manner of computation passed on to the Greeks and Romans, as hath been shewn in a variety of instances. By the *seven* Churches of Asia are implied *all* the Churches of Asia, and, it may be, all the Christian Churches, in whatever situation or period of the world. Such was the opinion of the most ancient commentators on the Apocalypse, who lived near to the time of its publication ; for such is delivered to us by Andreas Cæsariensis, Arethas, Victorinus, Cyprian, &c., who profess to follow them. Andreas, the most ancient of these, commenting on this passage, says, *το μυστικον τῶν πανταχῇ ἐκκλησιῶν σημαινῶν*. These particular churches being now sunk in Mahometan superstition, all the Christian Churches at this day

and to the end of time, inherit the prophetic knowledge revealed, the advice given, the threatenings denounced, and the blessings promised, by their divine Lord.

Ver. 4, 5. *Grace be unto you, and peace, &c.*] The salutation, in this epistle, resembles those in other epistles of the New Testament; in almost all of which the inspired writer entreats “Grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.” But there is here a considerable variation in the form of expression, which seems to take its colouring from the vision that St. John, the writer, had beheld, and is going to describe; for the description of God the Father is the same as that by which he is addressed in ch. iv. 8, and which is of the same meaning as the *I am* of Exodus iii. 14; that is, *the eternal God*, whose name, *Jehovah*, signifies *he that is, and was, and shall be*. Hammond, Vitringa.

The description of God the Son is likewise taken from the vision; for our Lord there styles himself *the faithful and true witness*, (ch. iii. 14.) He is so called prophetically by Isaiah, (ch. lv. 4.) The primitive Christians, who in the Gallic Churches suffered martyrdom, considered the title of martyr or witness as peculiarly belonging to the Lord Jesus, who sealed his doctrine with his sacred blood, and they were unwilling that it should be applied to themselves. (Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 2.)

In the same passage of the vision, our Lord calls himself also, “the beginning of the creation of God;” and by St. Paul he is styled “the first fruits from the dead. (1 Cor. i. 20.) And in respect to the third character here assigned him, “prince, or ruler (*Ἀρχων*) of the kings of the earth,” it is an object of the whole prophecy to exhibit him “King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Ch. xvii. 14. xix. 16.)

But in this salutation, in conjunction with God the Father and God the Son, thus exhibited, there is a third power mentioned, from whom also grace and peace are entreated to descend upon the Christians of the seven Churches, namely, “from the seven Spirits which are before his throne.” To understand which emblem, we must refer likewise to the vision, (ch. iv. 5,) where seven lamps of fire are seen burning before the throne of God, and are affirmed to be “the seven Spirits of God.” And when we consider, that no created Being, ever so resplendent, can with any propriety or pretension, be conjoined with the Father and the Son, in the divine prerogative of receiving prayers and bestowing grace, as in this salutation; and that the seven Spirits of God are in this sacred book described, as belonging to the Son, as well as to the Father, (ch. iii. 1. v. 6,) we shall be strongly inclined to conclude, that no other power can be here intended, but that perfect, universal, holy Spirit of God, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, and, in the form of *fire*,<sup>1</sup> descended upon the apostles at the great day of Pentecost. The comment of Venerable Bede on this passage is just and forcible: “Unum Spiritum dicit septiformem, quæ est perfectio et plenitudo.”<sup>2</sup> And indeed, as Vitringa has

<sup>1</sup> There is a striking resemblance between the “cloven tongues like as of fire,” and the lights beaming from oil on the branches of the lampbearer. Acts ii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Clemens Alexandriensis, and a few others among the ancients, says Vitringa, and some modern writers, among whom is Dr. Hammond, have supposed the seven Spirits to represent seven superior angels, such as those to whom the seven trumpets (ch. viii.) are committed. But this learned and able commentator powerfully resists this interpretation. “They,” says he, “are expressly said to be the seven eyes of the Lamb, or Christ, and the seven lamps of God; but these are inherent in God, a part of the Deity by which he perceives; they are not external of the Godhead, and therefore must be his Holy Spirit. Of all the commentators who have in-

justly observed, it has been the received doctrine of the Church, that by the seven Spirits and the seven lamps of fire, is represented the Holy Spirit, or the seven Charismata thereof, mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah.

But the Persons in the Godhead do not in this passage appear in their regular order. The Holy Spirit is placed before the Son. To account for which, we must again have recourse to the vision, (ch. iv. 5,) where this emblem of the Holy Ghost is seen attendant upon the Father alone; this being the point of time before the appearance of the Son under his human character, represented by the Lamb, to take his place on the throne. (See the Note, ch. iv. 5.) Another reason which may be assigned for this apparent irregularity,—a reason not inconsistent with that already stated is,—that the mention of the Son seems reserved to the last, in order that it may connect immediately with his character and description, as the great Agent of the prophecy, which follows in the four succeeding verses.

Ver. 5. *Unto him that loved us, &c.*] The Doxology follows the Salutation, as in some other of the sacred epistles. But in this instance it is addressed more especially to the Son of God, as the giver and

terpreted the seven Spirits to be the seven archangels, Joseph Mede is the most able; and his defence of this system may be seen in pages 40, 61, and 908 of his works. But this insuperable objection to his conclusions will still remain—that no created Being can be united in the Godhead with the Father and Son, so as to receive prayers and decree blessings. And in answer to this learned writer's assertion, that the eyes and horns of the Lamb cannot represent the Holy Spirit, let it be considered, that when the Saviour appears in the form of a Lamb, it is his human, suffering form, when his extraordinary and divine knowledge and power were both derived to him from the Holy Spirit. (Luke iv. 18.)



grand agent of this Revelation, to him who so loved us as to die for our salvation, (Pyle,) and to prepare for his faithful servants a kingdom in which they are “to reign with him,” (Matt. xxv. 34; Luke xii. 32; 2 Tim. ii. 12; 1 Cor. iv. 8. vi. 2, 3,) and to become “a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood to God even his Father,” (1 Pet. ii. 5. 9.)

Ver. 7. *Behold he cometh, &c.*] The Son of God is now described as coming in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of the Father, (as foretold in Dan. vii. 13; Matt. xxiv. 30,) to preside at the great day of judgment, terrible to obstinate sinners, and to his unrepentant enemies, especially those Jews who demanded of Pilate his crucifixion; and whose descendants, continuing to reject his salvation, seem more particularly described here, as the φυλαι τῆς γῆς, the tribes of the land, the holy land, to whom he “came as his own, but they received him not,” (John i. 11.) These shall bewail themselves, (κοφονται, mid. voice,) seeing his glory, and their own shame and danger. (See Zech. xii. 10; and Louth, in loc.) And such also shall be the wretched condition of those professed Christians, of every age and nation, who by sin, as the apostle says, “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame,” (Heb. vi. 6.)

Ver. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega.*] In the same spirit of pious exultation, St. John continues to proclaim the supreme dignity of the Son of God; employing the very words in which the Saviour had ascribed to himself in the vision the divine attributes, by which, in sublime union with the Father, he fills eternity, and exercises almighty power. This is no new doctrine, but the same which pervades the whole of the New Testament. (See

John i. 1—13. v. 26, 19, 22. xiv. 11. xvi. 15 ; Col. i. 16, 17 ; Heb. i. 2, 3, 8 ; 1 John v. 20 ; also Isaiah xlv. 6.) He is the first and the last, the original Creator, and final Judge of the world ; to whose illustrious advent, and complete triumph over the enemies of his Church, the prophet, who had already seen it exhibited in vision, exultingly adverts, even before he begins his narration.

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## PART I.

### SECTION III.

*The appearance of the Lord Jesus, with the symbols of his Power, and the commission given by him to St. John, to write what he beholds.*

CHAP. i. ver. 9, to the end.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last : and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia ; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks ;

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow ; and his eyes were as a flame of fire ;



15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Ver. 9. *I John, &c.*] John the apostle, who was banished by the emperor Domitian to the isle of Patmos, where he was favoured with this prophetic vision. See Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. 18.

Ver. 10. *The Lord's Day.*] The Christian Sabbath. Lowman.

*A trumpet.*] The trumpet was the voice of God, at the awful delivery of the divine Law from Mount Sinai, (Exod. xix. 16;) and so shall be again at the last day, 1 Thess. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 52.

Ver. 12. *To see the voice.*] To see who it was that uttered the voice. Daubuz.

*Seven golden candlesticks,*] or lamp-bearers. These are explained, in verse 20, to signify the seven Churches, or the universal Church of Christ, which bears aloft the spiritual light of divine knowledge, for the information and direction of the world. (See Note, ver. 4.) The Lord Jesus has himself supplied this light, and is therefore fitly represented as in the midst of these lamp-bearers, this his universal Church. So Irenæus, (lib. v. cap. 20.)

Ver. 13. *Like unto the Son of Man, &c.*] So our Lord is prophetically styled in Dan. x. 16 ; and so he usually styled himself in the Gospel. But from the writer of this vision having noted this likeness, we are led to conclude, that he was one of the disciples who had seen the Lord in his human appearance. And what John could this be, at so late a period as when this Revelation was written, but John the apostle and evangelist? He, of all the apostles, seems to have been reserved for this important purpose. The likeness might be preserved, although the appearance of the divine Saviour was far more glorious than when he trod the earth in a human form. But St. John was one of those apostles who “had also seen his excellent glory,” when he was transfigured before them on the holy mount, (Matt. xvii. 2 ; 2 Pet. i. 17 ;) and also after his resurrection, when his personal appearance was so altered by the change from mortality, that the disciples at first with difficulty acknowledged him. He is habited like a priest, as in Exodus xxviii. xxxix. being “a Priest for ever,” “ever living to make intercession for us,” (Heb. iv. 20 ; vii. 25.) The brightness of his appearance is similar to that of other glorified appearances described in holy writ, (Matt. xvii. 2 ; Dan. vii. 9. x. 5, 6.)

Ver. 15. *His feet like fine brass.*] More properly *smelting brass*. See Schleusner in voc. Χαλχολιβανον ; also Grotius and Vitrina in Locum.

Ver. 16. *Seven stars.*] By our Lord himself, ver. 20, these are explained to signify the angels of the seven Churches.

*And from his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*] This is the weapon by which our Lord and his followers are to conquer at the last, (ch. xix. 15,

21.) In a passage of Isaiah, prophetic of our Saviour, it is said : “ He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked,” (Isa. xi. 4 ;) agreeably to which, “ the sword of the Spirit ” is called by St. Paul “ the word of God,” (Eph. vi. 17 ;) and is the weapon with which (even “ with the Spirit of his mouth,”) the Lord will destroy the man of sin, (2 Thess. ii. 8.) These passages afford considerable light to the expression before us ; and show clearly the nature of the weapons by which our Lord and his Church are to gain their victories ; not by the usual instruments of human warfare, but by the preaching of his word in evangelical purity and truth.

From the whole of this description we collect, that the Person appearing to the prophet St. John in this vision, is no other than the only begotten Son of God ; which, if it should be at all doubted by the reader, who has advanced only so far in this book of Revelation, will become abundantly manifest in the addresses to the seven Churches, where this great Personage will be seen to apply to himself, under the name of “ the Son of God,” the particulars of the description. (See ch. ii. 18.)

Ver. 17. *As dead.*] The effect here described is such as might be expected, from the conflict of passions in the breast of the apostle ; of surprise and delight, of fear and joy. For it was the appearance of “ the Son of man,” who on earth had blessed St. John with his peculiar love ; but it was, at the same time, his glorified appearance, Godlike and awful.

*His right hand.*] The right hand, in Scripture, bestows protection, and conveys spiritual gifts, (Psa. xviii. 35. xx. 6 ; Acts viii. 18.) The touch

felt palpably by the apostle agrees with that part of holy writ which represents our Lord's body an object of feeling after his resurrection. This passage is sublime. Mahomet has imitated it, but with a vicious excess. The hand of God, touching him, he represents to be *cold*.<sup>1</sup>

*Fear not.*] Similar to this was the comforting assurance given to the holy Virgin, to Zacharias, to the shepherds, to the women at the sepulchre, under like circumstances of alarm, "*Fear not.*" At our Lord's transfiguration, as told by St. Matthew, (ch. xvii.) the three chosen apostles, of whom John was one, "*were sore afraid, and fell upon their faces; and Jesus came, and touched them, and said, arise, be not afraid.*" The similarity of this transaction, remembered by St. John, must have been highly consolatory to him at this awful time. "Who can read," says Michaelis, "the address of Jesus to John, sinking to the ground with fear, and not be affected with the greatness of the thought and the expressions?" (Introd. to New Test. ch. xxxiii. sect. 10.) In fact, it was a true and simple description of a real and awful event.

*I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth.*] See above, ver. 8. But in the form and connexion in which this passage stands here, I have thought it useful to propose a slight correction in the translation, extending only to the punctuation, and removing the fuller stop to the end of the sentence. Εγώ εμι ὁ πρῶτος, καὶ ὁ ἐσχάτος, καὶ ὁ ζων. "I am the first, and the last, and He who liveth." For eternity of life is an essential attribute of the Son of God, inherent in his divine nature. *He* lives of himself, *we* live through him. (See John v. 26. xi. 25.) But though immortal in his divine nature,

<sup>1</sup> Prideaux, Life of Mahomet. Vie de Mahomed, par Boulainvilliers.

for man's salvation he took an human form, and "became obedient unto death," and by this extraordinary submission obtained "the keys of death and of hell."

*Death* is a formidable foe to human nature, deriving his power from the transgression of our first parents. The passage of death leads directly to *Hell*; by which we are to understand, not the Gehenna or place of punishment, but the Scheol of the Hebrews, the Hades of the Greeks, (which word is here used,) the place of departed souls, whether happy or miserable. (See the learned notes of Grotius on Matt. xvi. 18; Luke xvi. 23. xxiii. 43; and Schleusner or Parkhurst on the word Ἀδης.) The gates of Hell are mentioned by 'our Saviour, (Matt. xvi. 18.) The gates of Death in other passages of Scripture, (Job xxxviii. 17; Psal. ix. 13.) The same metaphorical expressions are used by heathen writers, (Homer. Il. ix. 312.) The keys of these gates are in the exclusive keeping of "the Captain of our salvation," who, by suffering death, hath obtained the mastery over it, and insured to his faithful followers a safe passage through them to his kingdom of glory, (Heb. ii. 14.)

Ver. 19. *Write, &c.*] This verse, as it stands in the received translation, may perhaps be usefully corrected as follows: "Write *therefore* the things that thou seest;" (εἰδεεῖς, aorist)—"both the things that now are, and those which are about to be after these." The particle οὐν is not noticed in the received translation, but it has great force in this passage, as Grotius has observed. "οὐν [ergo]," says he, "id est, quia me tam potentem vides." For thus the subject-matter, which the prophet is commissioned to deliver to the seven Churches, is divided (as it naturally divides) into two parts. First, the scene



at that time before him, with the addresses to the Churches, revealing to them, and commenting upon their *present* internal state; secondly, the events which were to happen to the Church universal in *future times*. In confirmation of this, it may be noted, that after the present state of the Churches has been gone through in the three first chapters, the prophet is called to another situation, where he is to behold “the things which must be hereafter,” *μετα ταυτα*, “the things which must happen *after these*.” Both are revealed by the same prophetic holy Spirit, which was equally necessary to discover the real internal state of the Church then existing, as the events which were to happen to it in futurity. Sardis, for instance, had the reputation of a *Living Church*, a church flourishing in faith, doctrine, and practice; but by the Spirit she is discovered, and pronounced to be *dead*, (ch. iii. 1.)

Ver. 20. *The mystery.*] *Μυστηριον*, in scriptural language, generally signifies hidden and recondite knowledge, which is accessible only by divine favour and revelation. But here, as also in ch. xvii. it is used to signify the meaning concealed under figurative resemblances. Thus the stars are angels or messengers, and the candlesticks are churches. With respect to the first of these, we may observe, that in Malachi ii. 7, the priest of the Lord is styled the angel or messenger of the Lord. And it appears, from the accounts we have received of the ancient synagogue, or Church of the Jews, that the ruler, or chief minister, was styled Sheliach Zibbor, the angel of the synagogue or congregation. (Buxtorf, *Synag. Jud.* Vitranga, de *Syn. Vet. atque ad locum.*) In conformity with this, the presidents (or bishops, as they were afterwards called)



of the ancient Christian Church, were so denominated.

The words *Αποστολος* and *κηρυξ*, principally used in the New Testament, have a similar meaning. They imply, that such persons act by a delegated authority from the Lord Christ, as his messengers or ambassadors ; who are therefore fitly represented under the emblem of stars, placed in his hand, under his direction ; being the lights supplied by him to illumine and instruct the Churches, which are represented as the candlesticks or lampbearers, on which the sacred light or doctrine is placed, and held forth to the world.

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## PART I.

### SECTION IV.

#### *Address to the Church in Ephesus.*

##### CHAP. ii. ver. 1—7.

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write : These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil : and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars ;

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Ver. 1. *Unto the Angel of the Church.*] The addresses of our Lord, to the angels, or presidents of the seven Churches, are not to them *personally*, but to the Church over which each of them presides. This might be made to appear from several instances, but will be sufficiently manifest in that to the Church of Thyatira, where *ὑμῖν μὲν λέγω* (I say to *you*, not to *thee*) seems plainly to show it.

They are addressed to the seven Asiatic Churches in particular ; and through them to the universal Christian Church in all times and places. Such is the figurative import of the number seven ; and in this sense this part of the Apocalypse was understood and applied by the most ancient expositors, who have been followed by Grotius, Hammond, Daubuz, Bengel, Bishop Newton, &c.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A few writers, among whom are the respectable names of Henry More and Vitringa, have thought that they have discovered a yet deeper prophetic mystery in these addresses, viz. that in them is foreshown and delineated the future state of the Church, from the time of the apostles to the end of the world, divided into seven successive and similar periods. The first idea of this mystical interpretation seems to have arisen among some monks of the thirteenth century. The student in divinity may see the question discussed with superior learning and ability by Vitringa, (in locum.) But if, captivated by his author, he should proceed with him to apply, in regular order, the description of the seven particular Churches to seven successive periods of the universal Church, he will encounter insuperable difficulties. No description of any of the seven Churches will be found to quadrate with the long period of Gothic darkness, which preceded the Reformation. Nor have any of them (especially the last of them, which ought to contain it, viz. Laodicea) any similarity to that victorious and purer period, which, from the prophecies of this sacred book, we are entitled to look forward to in the latter days. At all events, the application of these addresses, as prophetic of times to come, in the draft given by Vitringa, cannot be the true one ; for he closes it with his own times, as ful-

*Ephesus.*] This, according to the report of Strabo and Pliny, was one of the most splendid cities in Asia. Possessing the famous temple of Diana, it became a distinguished mart of heathen idolatry. Hence the preachers of Christian doctrine were opposed in this city from political and mercenary motives, (Acts xix.) However, by the diligence of St. Paul, directed by the holy Spirit, during his residence here of two years, the religion of Christ was successfully propagated, as from a central point, “so that all they, who dwelt in Asia, heard the word of the Lord Jesus,” (Acts xix. 10.) Thus Ephesus became the most proper place for St. John’s residence, when, some years afterwards, he came to dwell in Asia. (Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. iii. c. 23.) Such extraordinary advantages lead us to expect, that the city possessing them would be free from heretical infection. And accordingly we find in this address to its Christian Church, by her all-seeing Lord, that she is commended highly for her orthodoxy, and her resistance to heretical impostors; and at the same time severely reprimanded for her defect in charity, for to whom much is given, of the same much will be required.

*These things saith he, or thus saith he.*] The supreme Head of the Christian Church is now in the

filling the type of Laodicea. But surely, ages upon ages are yet to be expected in the Christian Church, before its final period on earth.

There is another yet more fanciful exposition of the addresses, which has not wanted the support of some able and learned men. Under the Greek name of each Church, the successive character of the universal Church has been supposed to lie hidden. Venerable Bede is the first writer in whom I recollect to have seen this mode of interpretation. He finds *Myrrh* in the word *Smyrna*, and then applies the quality of myrrh to the city of that name. Others, following the example, (*exemplum vitiis imitabile*,) have extended the application to all the seven Churches.

act of visitation and superintendence. To the Church of Ephesus, with which he begins, he declares himself in that character and office: as walking amidst his Churches, and supporting and directing their teachers and governors.

Ver. 2. *Canst not bear.* } The word βασιζω, to  
 Ver. 3. *Hast borne, &c.* } bear or endure, is here  
 twice applied to the Church at Ephesus. She is commended, first, for bearing the yoke of Christ, (Matt. xi. 29,) without fainting under the persecutions which at that time afflicted the Christians; secondly, for not bearing, but rejecting, the yoke of ordinances and false doctrines, which pretended apostles had attempted to impose upon her. These deceivers, according to the injunctions of St. John, she had tried, and found wanting, (1 John iv. 1.)

Ver. 4. *Thy first love.*] Την αγαπην σε την πρωτην, which we may perhaps more properly translate “*thy former love.*” Grotius has remarked on this passage, that πρωτην, as in John i. 15, has the force of προτερην. Tertullian thus understood it: desertam dilectionem Ephesiis imputat. (De pœnitentiâ, sect. 8.) By some commentators this former love is understood to be *the love of God*, by others the *love of man*. Both of these may be comprehended in the expression. Neither of them can be complete without the other. The love of God is seen and proved by keeping the commandments, which are fulfilled only by charity. In the next verse the Ephesians are called to repentance, and the performance of the first or former works of charity.

Ver. 5. *Will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*] That is, the Ephesian Church, so defective in love and good works, shall cease to

be a Christian Church of eminence, giving light and example to the surrounding regions.

That the Church of Ephesus profited at this time by these severe threatnings, is to be collected from the testimony of Ignatius, which was given immediately before his martyrdom, and ten or twenty years after this divine rebuke. For from his epistles we learn, that when other Asiatic Churches were becoming corrupt, that of Ephesus was flourishing in a pure faith and practice. (Ignat. Epist. ad Eph. sect. 9; Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. 26. iv. 7.) She continued for some ages in high account among the Churches of Christendom, but gradually sunk into that corruption of doctrine which has darkened all the Asiatic Churches; and since the desolation of the coast of Lesser Asia, by the Turkish tyranny in the fourteenth century, Ephesus is become little better than a heap of ruins; so completely is her “ candlestick removed.”

Ver. 6. *Nicolaitanes.*] It is observed by Mosheim, that our knowledge of the sects and heresies in the first century is very imperfect; and doubts have arisen, whether the early writers of the Church do not confound the Nicolaitanes here mentioned, with another sect founded afterwards by one Nicolaus. It appears however, from the general testimony of the ancients, that these Nicolaitanes were “ impious in their doctrines, and impure in their lives;” that they held principles, afterwards adopted by the Gnostics, denying the humanity of Christ and his real sufferings in the flesh; and that Nicolaitanes are intended in those passages of St. Jude and St. Peter, which represent heretical leaders, “ like the Sodomites, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.” It is of their *practice* that our Lord speaks with detestation in this passage:



“Thou hatest the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”

Ver. 7. *He that hath an ear, let him hear.*] This is the form of bespeaking spiritual attention to figurative language, so frequently used by our Lord in the Gospels. It is used for the same purpose at the conclusion of all the seven addresses; in that particular part of them where the language changes from plain to figurative; where attention is required to gain and apply the spiritual knowledge conveyed by symbols.

*To him that overcometh.*] In the religion of Christ, as represented in the New Testament, the Christian is described as having to *contend* against formidable enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Of these, the last, by his spiritual nature, and conceded influence and power, is the chieftain who attempts to overthrow him. But the Christian is supplied with spiritual arms and aid, which, if used faithfully and diligently, will defeat the wiles of the enemy. His Saviour, “the Captain of his salvation,” led the way, when, in a human form, he himself fought this battle, and conquered. And he expects his soldiers to follow him. But besides the conflict with his own share of evil, which every one has to wage *individually* in this life, there is a *general* warfare in which the Christian is arrayed under his great Leader, against the same enemy, who is perpetually opposing the progress of the Christian Church, by the arts of seduction and corrupt doctrine, and by the terrors of persecution. It is the object of the Apocalypse to predict this warfare, in mysterious signs, from the early times of Christianity to the end of the world. When these warnings were delivered, the conflict had begun. The holy faith was attacked by delusive teachers



from within, and by Jewish and heathen persecutors from without. Under the latter of these St. John himself was suffering, in the desert isle of Patmos, when he was called to behold these visions.

*To eat of the tree of Life.*] The heavenly reward of Christian conquest is pronounced in these words, by which is signified clearly, and by consent of almost all the commentators, *an happy and heavenly immortality*. Such a tree there was, within the reach of our first parents, (Gen. ii.); but they forfeited their claim to it, by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree. They listened to the seduction of their wily foe, and were *overcome*; and thus became subject to *death*, the penalty of their disobedience.

But the second Adam, by voluntarily undergoing this penalty in behalf of fallen man, has restored to him his lost privilege. By following his Saviour's precepts and example, he becomes free from the bonds of death, and entitled to partake of a blessed immortality. And this immense possession is bestowed upon him by the *gift* of his Saviour, "who alone hath immortality," "which he hath brought to light through the Gospel," (1 Tim. vi. 16; 2 Tim. i. 10.)

## PART I.

## SECTION V.

*Address to the Church in Smyrna.*

## CHAP. ii. ver. 8—11.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Ver. 8. *Smyrna.*] Smyrna is described by Pliny to have been the next city to Ephesus, as well in consequence as in vicinity, (Hist. Nat. v. c. 29.) There is no mention of it as a Church in other books of Scripture; yet a church was here established in the apostolic times, as appears from the epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæan Christians, (Vitringa.) The renowned martyr Polycarp was one of its earliest bishops; and Irenæus, who knew him, asserts, that he was known personally to St. John. But as he suffered in the reign of Verus, at the age of eighty-six years, he must have been too young at the time of this Revelation, to have then exercised this important office, (Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. iv. c. 15.

lib. v. c. 20.) The Church of Smyrna sent her bishops to the Councils of the Christian Church for many centuries; but sunk under the common catastrophe of maritime Asia in the fourteenth century. Smyrna having continued a mart for European traffic, is yet a city of considerable population, and contains many professed Christians.

*Thus saith the first and the last.*] The title under which the supreme Head addresses this Church, is the same which he assumed on his first appearance to St. John, (ch. i. 17, 18.) The character of it agrees with the purport of the address, which is, to encourage the persecuted Smyrnæans, to meet confidently the fiery trial of persecution, even unto death, in sure reliance of triumphing finally over the enemy, as he their Lord had done.

Ver. 9. *I know—thy poverty, but thou art rich.*] In the 21st chapter and 7th verse of this prophecy, it is declared, by the same great authority, that “He that overcometh shall inherit *all things*.” In this career of victory, the Smyrnæans were now seen to be advancing, by their omniscient Lord. Whatsoever therefore might be their poverty in the things of this world, they were “rich in good works through faith, rich towards God.” They had “laid up their treasure in heaven,” thus illustrating the seeming paradox, applied by St. Paul to the first preachers of the Gospel, “having nothing, yet possessing *all things*.” (2 Cor. vi. 10.)

*Them which say they are Jews, and are not.*] Our Saviour has described, in the good Nathanael, “an Israelite indeed,” (John i. 48;) and St. Paul, “a Jew inwardly, in spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God,” (Rom. ii. 28, 29.) These Jews of Smyrna were not of this description: they were violent bigots to their fallen reli-

gion, who blasphemed the name of Israelite by adopting it, and acted as emissaries of Satan in persecuting the rising Christian Church. "This was their practice," says the Smyrnæan account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, written in the succeeding century.

Ver. 10. *Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison.*] Here is a prophecy which looks beyond the things *ἀ εἰσι*, to things which are to come. Yet it appears mainly connected with the scene of things then present, with the Smyrnæans then living, then commended; to whom it is foretold, that they shall suffer a persecution of ten days, and some of them until death, from "the Jews, the synagogue of Satan," above described. Ten days, in the language of scriptural prophecy, may be accounted ten years. (So Ezek. iv. 6; Numb. xiv. 34; Isaiah xx. 3; and thus the times in the sacred prophecies are generally understood.) But whether we are to use this computation in this passage, may be doubted; for we are defective in the history of its completion, which, as it related to persons then in existence, we must suppose to have taken place soon after the prediction.

We have indeed an account of a persecution undergone by the Church of Smyrna in the year 169, when, among others, their venerable bishop Polycarp suffered martyrdom. But there is no proof that it continued either ten years, or ten days; and this happened more than seventy years after the delivery of the prophecy, extending also to other of the Asiatic Churches, which had no such warning. It may therefore seem most probable, that the persecution now foretold took place in that generation, during ten days, and among the Smyrnæans only, from the influence of the Jews described in the pro-

phesy as then ready to excite and exercise it.<sup>1</sup> This prophecy, thus fulfilled, would serve a temporary purpose of great moment. It could not fail to convince the Christians of the seven Churches, that the revelation, which foretold it, was from God; and that therefore the remaining predictions, in the same book, would likewise receive their accomplishment. This book they would therefore revere, as sacred, and deliver down to posterity, entire and uncontaminated; which they appear to have done.

*A crown of life.*] *τον στεφανον της ζωης*, *THE crown of life*. A crown denotes regal and triumphant power and glory. The Messiah, “King of kings,” has many crowns, (ch. xix. 12,) and he awards them to his victorious followers. *The crown of life* is a triumphant immortality. If we suffer with Christ, says St. Paul, “we shall also *reign* with him;” and the crown, thus obtained, he calls *incorruptible*.” (1 Cor. ix. 25.)

Ver. 11. *The second death.*] This expression is peculiar to the Apocalypse, not being found in any other of the sacred writings. Irenæus, who, from his near approach to the times of St. John, we must esteem the best informed, in some respects, of the ancient commentators, explains *the second death* to mean *the Gehenna, or eternal fire*, the place of punishment for incorrigible sinners. This explanation is confirmed by comparing with this passage the same expression in Rev. xx. 14, and xxi. 8, where *the second death* seems plainly declared to be that *lake of fire* and place of extreme punishment. It is also to be observed, that in Luke xii. 4, 5, our Saviour

<sup>1</sup> Some commentators have sought for the completion of this prediction at even a much later period, the Dioclesian persecution, in the third century. But this did not last ten years, and raged throughout the Christian world.



has exhorted us “not to be afraid of them that kill the body, and, after that, have no more that they can do” against us, (that is, we are not to fear death in its *first* state,) but he calls upon us “to fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into *hell*,” εἰς τὴν γέενναν, which γέεννα is explained (Mark ix. 43,) to be the “fire that never shall be quenched.” Such is *the second death*, from the dreadful sufferings of which, the faithful follower of Christ is pronounced entirely secure.

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## PART I.

### SECTION VI.

#### *Address to the Church in Pergamos.*

##### CHAP. ii. ver. 12—17.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos, write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.



Ver. 12. *Pergamos.*] This city is described, by Strabo, Pliny, and Livy, to have been in their times a splendid metropolis, honoured and enriched by a long succession of the Attalian kings. A heathen city, of such description, must be supposed to have been corrupt in doctrine and morals, and thus to have merited the appellation given to it by our Lord, “the throne of Satan.” Its famous library, of two hundred thousand volumes, had rendered it a seat of oriental learning, whence sprang the “philosophy and vain deceit” condemned by St. Paul, (Col. ii. 8); and the *Baθn*, or depths of Gnostical heresy, ascribed to Satan in the address to the Church of Thyatira, (ch. ii. 24,) and this circumstance may have contributed also to its designation under this title. Before such a city, the supreme Visitor of the Church appears armed, most appropriately, with the sword, or penetrating word of God, (see Note, ch. i. 16, and Isa. xlix. 2. *Vitrin-ga*.) It is with this powerful weapon that Antichrist shall be slain, and the enemies of Christ and of his Church be finally subdued. Isa. xi. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xix. 15, 21.

Pergamos is described by modern travellers as being inhabited by two or three thousand Turks, who have converted its best churches into mosques. There are yet some few Christians remaining, to whom a priest, sent from Smyrna, officiates occasionally.

Ver. 13. *Antipas.*] No account has been transmitted to our times, of this martyr; but Andreas Cæsariensis reports, that he had seen the history of his martyrdom. However, we plainly collect, that a persecution unto death had raged against the Christians in Pergamos, and that in defence of their faith they had nobly undergone the fiery trial; and

the praise of their virtue is enhanced by a consideration of the corrupt society around them, “where Satan dwelleth.”

Ver. 14. *Doctrine of Balaam.*] The reproof of this Church is, that she had in her bosom some, who, like Balaam, (described in the 25th and 31st chapters of Numbers,) held such doctrines, as would “turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.” This by the apostles Peter and Jude is called following the way or error of Balaam. 2 Pet. ii. 10—15; Jude 4.

Ver. 15. *Nicolaitanes.*] These (see ch. ii. 5) were followers of the doctrine of Balaam as described in the last note. So the name signifies, both in Hebrew and Arabic, says Michaelis, (Introd. to New Test. ch. xxviii. sect. 3.)

Ver. 17. *The hidden manna.*] Our Saviour had declared to the multitude which followed him, in expectation of being miraculously fed, as their forefathers had been with manna in the wilderness, that he himself is that “bread of life, which came down from heaven, of which if a man eat, he shall live for ever,” (John vi. 26, &c); and he calls them to attend to its spiritual signification. “The words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life.” The *hidden manna* is this bread of life in its spiritual sense, of which the manna, hidden and laid up in the tabernacle, free from corruption, was a type; namely, the benefits derived to the faithful followers of Christ by the offering of his body, forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting.

*A white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.*] The researches of the learned have abundantly

shown, that beans, and counters in the form of beans, were used by the ancients, wherewith to give vote, or judgment, or military honour and reward; the white mark being favourable, the black one unfavourable, to the pretensions of the candidate. In conformity with such customs, the *white stone*, given by our Saviour, to him who should overcome his spiritual enemies, would be easily understood to signify his acceptance of such person as absolved from sin and rewarded. And since it appears also from scripture, that the favoured servants of God were frequently honoured with *new names*, (as were Abram, Jacob, Simon, &c. Daubuz,) it may be concluded, that the *new name written on the white stone* is a token of spiritual benefit, and of so surpassing a kind and character, that it can only be known by being enjoyed. In short, it seems to be that supreme felicity, destined by the Lord of Heaven for his true followers; of which no adequate notion can be formed on this side the grave. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,” &c. (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

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## PART I.

### SECTION VII.

#### *Address to the Church in Thyatira.*

CHAP. ii. ver. 18 to the end.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication ; and she repented not.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death ; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts ; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak ; I will put upon you none other burden.

25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations :

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Ver. 18. *Thyatira.*] This was a considerable city on the road leading from Pergamos to Sardis, and about fifty miles distant from the former. Lydia, who at Philippi received St. Paul and Silas, was of this place ; and, being a person of note, and divinely called to the Christian religion, she might probably become the means of establishing a Church at Thyatira. In the remains of this city, no Christians are said to be found at this time.

*The Son of God, &c.*] For an explanation of this description, see ch. i. 14, 15.

Ver. 19. *Thy last works to be more than the first.*] This excellent commendation is the reverse of the reproof of the Ephesians, (ver. 4,) and of that lamentable state described in Luke xi. 26, and 2 Pet. ii. 20, “ the last state worse than the first.”

Ver. 20. *Jezebel*.] This has been understood by Grotius, and some other commentators, to signify a person of rank and influence at Thyatira, who seduced the Christians in this city to intermix heathen impurities with their religious services; and that she is here called Jezebel, as acting the part of that idolatrous queen, 1 Kings xvi. 31. But in scriptural allegory, it is not unusual for the collective body of a nation, or people, to be designated under the name of a woman. The *woman Jezebel* has therefore been supposed, by other learned expositors, (Hammond, Durham, Vitrina, &c.), to represent a sect or body of misleading teachers who were harboured in the church of Thyatira. And it appears that in this interpretation they followed the ancient commentators, Andreas Cæsariensis, (who professes to give the explications of Papias, Irenæus, Methodius, &c.), Arethas, and Venerable Bede.<sup>1</sup> Whichever was the true meaning of this figurative name, it would be clearly comprehended by the members of the Church; to which it was addressed. The state of the Church, at that time, would immediately direct the right application of the metaphor, by indicating the criminals, and the nature and extent of their crime.

*To commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*] Both these crimes are expressly for bidden to the Gentile converts, in the edict of the apostles, (Acts xv.) 1. Πορνεία, under which expression are comprehended all those carnal impurities which were so common among the heathen, and in some instances were admitted to be part of their sacred rites. 2. Ειδωλοθυσία, Αλισγηματα των Ειδωλων, meats offered unto idols, to partake of which, when avowed to be such, was to partake of the idolatry. The two sins were nearly connected in the heathen

<sup>1</sup> See below, the Notes, ver. 23, 24.



institutions, and tended to introduce and foster each other.

Ver. 22. *I will cast her into a bed.*] A bed of sickness, say the ancient expositors, followed by Vitrin-ga, Daubuz, &c. I will change her adulterous bed, or state, to one of sickness. (Schleusner.)

*Adultery.*] It is worthy of remark, that the crime, which, in the verses preceding, had been called *fornication*, is now denominated *adultery*. In the woman Jezebel it is no more than *fornication*, because she is an alien, a seducer, and false prophetess, whom the Lord does not acknowledge as belonging to the true Christian Church his spouse. But the same crime, committed by any of the body acknowledged by him in that relation, amounts to adultery. And it becomes so on this ground: the nation of Israel, the Church of God under the Old Testament, is represented in scriptural allegory as *a woman*: in the days of her purity as a *virgin*, in her happy prospects as a bride; in her impure connections with the gods of the nations, as an *harlot*. And whereas the Great Being, who had taken her under his peculiar care, was pleased to represent himself to her as the Husband who had espoused her; so, by the continuance of the metaphor, she is described in her sinful state, as “treacherously departing from her husband, and committing adultery with stocks and stones;” but, after chastisement producing repentance, she is restored to favour and matrimonial distinction, and becomes fruitful in children, even the multitudes of the Gentile Churches. This imagery occurs frequently in the prophetical parts of the Old Testament, in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Ezekiel; in the 16th chapter of the last of these prophets may be seen the whole of these figurative ideas drawn forth into a complete and most affecting allegory. It is in conformity with this, that our



Lord, the head of the Christian Church, is represented in the New Testament as the bridegroom and husband to his Church, the bride and spouse; and her apostacy from him is denominated, as in this passage, *adultery*. (2 Cor. xi. 2; Rom. vii. 4; Eph. v. 23, &c.) Yet as we advance farther in the prophecies of this book, we shall find, that although the crime is *adultery*, the criminal Church which thus apostatizes is stigmatized, not as an adulteress, but as an *harlot*. The reason of this seems to be, that as the Church has deserted her God, so he forsakes her. He gives her a bill of divorce, and she is no longer distinguished as a married woman, but becomes a degraded castaway, and an harlot.

Ver. 23. *I will kill her children with death.*] An hebraism, denoting, by its repetition of the term, the certainty of the event. So Ezekiel xxx. 27, where the Septuagint translation has *Θανατω απομκτενω*. (Bengel.) Sickness and death are represented by St. Paul as punishments inflicted on those who abused divine ordinances in apostolic times, (1 Cor. xi. 30.) *Θανατος* may signify in this passage, as it evidently does in ch. vi. 8, *pestilence*, and thus express the mode of death inflicted. We have here an additional reason, as Vitringa observes, for supposing the name *Jezebel* to be applied figuratively to a sect of false teachers, and not to a certain individual; because the disciples of such seducers, figuratively their children, would, by their own perverse conduct, merit and draw down upon themselves such punishment, when the innocent children of a bad woman might justly be spared.

Ver. 24. *This doctrine—the depths of Satan.*] Here is additional reason, why the woman *Jezebel* is to be understood in the figurative sense, as a sect. She

had a *doctrine*, and dealt in deep mysteries, calling them perhaps, with St. Paul, τα βάθη τῆς Θεᾶς, the deep things of God, (1 Cor. ii. 10,) but our Lord pronounces them to be *the depths of Satan*. The existence of such sects, seducing the primitive Christians, “by philosophy and vain deceit,” is evident from the writings of the apostles and apostolic fathers; and the Gnostics, who dealt eminently in these βάθη, thus entered and corrupted the Church.

Ver. 25. *Till I come.*] Ad judicium, quod quia incerto die promissum est, semper expectari debet. (Grotius.)

Ver. 26. *He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.*] To perseverance in the faith of Christ, and in the works arising therefrom, is promised *power over the nations*: that is, over the yet unconverted Gentiles. And this, in the verse following, is explained to be the same power which the Saviour himself had received over them, and which is expressed in words nearly resembling those prophetic of Christ, in the second Psalm. He is there pronounced to be the Son of God, and a King over kings and nations, to the utmost parts of the earth. “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd,” (Isa. xl. 11,) and all worldly and abused power shall fall before him. His iron rod, or *sceptre*, (for Παβδος should be thus translated, see Schleusner,) is of that strength which nothing can withstand. It is as the stone of Daniel’s vision, (ch. vii. 27,) which, cut out of the mountain without hands, breaks to pieces the kingdoms established in worldly and oppressive power, and thus increaseth until it fills the whole earth. And they of his servants who teach his Gospel by their word; and example, as did the good Thyatirans, will be

favoured by being selected as the instruments of this saving Power.

Ver. 28. *The morning star.*] A star is a teacher, (ch. i. 16;) our Lord is eminently such, and such he entitles himself, (ch. xxii. 16,) “The shining and morning star.” As such he was foretold, Numb. xxiv. 17; and a star, in the eastern or morning quarter, preceded his birth. “He was the true light (John i. 9) to lighten the Gentiles,” (Luke ii. 32;) and of this light which was in him, he imparted a share to the first preachers of his Gospel for converting the nations. Taken in this sense, the gift, of the morning star, is in “connection with the “power over the nations,” which is mentioned before it.

To some of the commentators it has seemed probable, that the gift of the morning star has particular reference to a future life; because, to obtain it, the Christian must keep his Lord's works “even unto the end.” But all the prospects of a Christian will have reference to eternal life, as promised to the faithful; and the dawnings and first light of such splendid blessings, taking possession of his mind, even during his abode here, will be a source of infinite delight, “shining more and more unto perfect day.” (Prov. iv. 18.)

## PART I.

## SECTION VIII.

*Address to the Church in Sardis.*

## CHAP. iii. ver. 1—6.

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Ver. 1. *Sardis.*] Sardis, situated on the river Pactolus, the seat of Cræsus, and of the Lydian kings, was proverbially the seat of riches. This city had suffered grievously by an earthquake, some years before the date of this vision, but had recovered her splendour, assisted by the bounty of Tiberius Cæsar, (Strabo, ii. p. 931.) Sardis possessed, in its natural situation, extraordinary means of acquiring riches. But riches are corruptive, and

lead to that supineness in religion, and profligacy of morals, which in this address are so alarmingly rebuked.

Sardis is now no more than a village. An ancient Christian church supplies the Turkish inhabitants with a mosque. The few Christians, if such they may be called, remaining here, have neither church nor minister.

*He that hath the Seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.]* In addressing the Church of Sardis, our Lord represents himself to them under the awful attributes, with which he had appeared to St. John at the opening of the vision, being such as more immediately concerned their state of religion. He hath that wondrous Spirit of God, in its perfection, which “searcheth the reins and the heart,” he is the great Ruler of all the ministers of God. No hidden moral or religious defect can be concealed from him, nor escape his animadversion. (See ch. i. 20.)

*Thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead.]* By a metaphor, frequent in the holy Scriptures, a person living in the defilements of this world, and neglectful of preparation for another, is said to be “dead while he liveth;” while he who meets death in the discharge of his Christian duty is pronounced “living though he die.” (John xi. 25, 26; 1 Tim. v. 6; 1 John iii. 14; Jude 12.) It is in this sense that our Lord commanded the disciples to “let the dead bury their dead,” (Matt. viii. 22.) And in this sense he now declares, that the Sardian Church, although it had the reputation of flourishing in life and vigour, is dead. The use of this metaphor was common amongst the Jews, (see Whitby on 1 Pet. iv. 6,) and the early fathers of the Church. Ignatius, Tertullian, &c., make frequent use of it.



Sardis, being thus dead, or asleep, to Christian duty, is called to wakefulness and vigilance. So in Ephesians, ch. v. 14. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," &c.

Ver. 3. *I will come on thee as a thief, &c.*] See 1 Thess. v. 1—7, the best comment on this text.

Ver. 4. *Names.*] Christian persons, whose *names* are registered in "the book of life." So Acts i. 15, and Rev. xi. 13. Grotius and Mede.

*Garments—white.*] By an obvious metaphor, what raiment is to the body, namely, its covering and ornament, such is the *habit* of practice to the soul. "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me," says Job; "my judgment was a robe and a diadem." Thus the Christian is required "to *put off* the old sinful man, and to *put on* the new, to put on Christ, to put on the righteousness which is by faith." The guest, who appears at the wedding of his Lord not so clothed, is cast into outer darkness. The wedding garment of the true Christian is *white*, pure, free from sinful stain, "*made clean by the blood of the Lamb.*" To obtain this heavenly clothing, without which there is no admission to the presence of God, we must put on "faith working by love;" in conformity with which, this white raiment is called "the righteousness of the saints," (ch. xix. 8. See also Eph. iv. 22, 24; Gal. iii. 27; 1 John i. 7; Rev. vii. 14.) Such must be the clothing of those, who, as a reward of their victory over temptation, shall be admitted to walk with their Redeemer "in white raiment," *εν λευκοις*; which expression is peculiar to St. John. See his Gospel, (ch. xx. 12,) where it is used to express the clothing of the heavenly angels.



Ver. 5. *The book of life.*] As in states and cities, they who obtained freedom and fellowship, were enrolled in the public register, and thence proved their title to citizenship; so the King of Heaven, and of the New Jerusalem, engages to preserve in his enrolment the names of those, who, like the good Sardians, shall preserve their allegiance by a faithful discharge of duty. He will own them, as his citizens, before men and angels. (Matt. x. 32; Luke x. 2; Psal. lxxix. 28; Ezek. xliii. 9; Exod. xxxii. 33; Dan. xii. 1.

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## PART I.

### SECTION IX.

#### *Address to the Church in Philadelphia.*

#### CHAP. iii. ver. 7—13.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is

new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Ver. 7. *Philadelphia.*] This city had its name from the founder of it, Attalus Philadelphus. Strabo relates that in his time,—not long before the date of this vision,—it had been greatly reduced in the number of its inhabitants, by frequent earthquakes, (lib. xii.) In 1312, it resisted the Turkish armies more successfully than the other cities of maritime Asia; but at length sunk under the common calamity, (Gibbon's Hist. vi. 314.) It now contains more Christians than any other of these cities, a consequence, perhaps, of its later subjugation. Four Christian churches, and above two hundred houses inhabited by Christians, are said to be standing in this city.

*He that is holy, he that is true, &c.*] To the Church of Philadelphia, whose faithful perseverance in Christian duty is afterwards so highly commended, the Lord represents himself in most consolatory terms. He takes to himself the epithets of *holy* and *true*; epithets appropriate to the great Father, who alone is the *Holy One*, and the *only true God*. But the same nature and attributes descend to “the only begotten Son, who is pronounced to be the express image of the Father,”—“the holy one, the truth and the life,”—“the true God and eternal life,” (Psa. xvi. 10; Mark i. 24; Acts iii. 14; John xiv. 6; 1 John v. 20.) He declares himself to be the great person typified and expressed in Isaiah xxii. 22, and ix. 6, who alone exercises complete rule in the house of his Father, the Church of God; who alone possesses the key which opens and shuts to eternal happiness or misery. See Bishop Louth on Isaiah xxii. 22.

Ver. 8. *An open door.*] Θύραν ἀνεῳγμένην, an opened door, opened by him who alone has the key of it, as above described. For our Lord has rendered the everlasting glories of his kingdom easy of access, to his faithful and repentant servants, by atoning for their past sins, by affording them spiritual assistance, and by supplying them with rules of conduct illustrated by his example. Hence he calls himself *the way* and *the door*, (John x. 9.) No one entereth but through him.

Ver. 9. *Jews—of the synagogue of Satan.*] It seems, that some Israelites, unworthy of the name, and like those described in ch. ii. 9, as disturbing and persecuting the Church at Smyrna, were also mischievously employed against this Church. But our Lord promises to these his faithful servants a complete triumph over them. This certainly took place in its proper time, though no account of it has come down to us. And with this probably was connected the preservation promised to the Philadelphian Christians, during a general persecution which was to follow.

Ver. 12. *Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.*] To the Christian, conquering in his spiritual warfare, his Lord promises to make him a pillar, or column, in God's temple or church. Such an honourable station is assigned to the apostles James and Peter, (στύλοι, Gal. ii. 9,) as supporting the Christian Church in their days. So in the second century, the martyr Attalus, of Pergamos, one of the seven Churches, was accounted; and in the third century, the Alexandrian martyrs, στύλοι τοῦ Θεοῦ, (Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. 1. and vi. 41;) and, as, upon the columns of temples, it was the ancient custom to inscribe *names*, the honour-

able names of benefactors and of their cities, so, upon this column, thus divinely appointed, shall be inscribed the sacred names of God, and of his only begotten Son, and of the *New Jerusalem*, the holy city, which St. Paul contrasts with the Jerusalem then existing in bondage, by the name of the “Jerusalem which is above, which is free, which is the mother of us all,” (Gal. iv. 24---27.) It is the Christian Church, or “general assembly of the first-born,” in its future heavenly glory; the city which “Abraham looked to,” “a building not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens, whose builder and maker is God,” (Heb. xi. 10---16; xii. 22---24.) This is the Jerusalem, whose splendour is prophetically displayed in the concluding chapters of the Apocalypse.

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## PART I.

### SECTION X.

#### *Address to the Church in Laodicea.*

CHAP. iii. ver. 14, to the end.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Ver. 14. *Laodicea.*] There were other cities of this name. That, which contained the Church here addressed, stood upon the river Lycus, flourishing in wealth, says Pliny; who wrote at no great distance of time from the date of this vision, (*Hist. Nat. v. c. xix.*) The ruin and desolation of this city are described by modern travellers as more complete and lamentable than those of the other six.

*The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*] This word, *Amen*, imports truth and certainty, and is so used frequently by our Saviour in his Gospel, *αμην, αμην, λεγω υμιν*. "The promises of God, in him," says St. Paul, "are, yea, and in him *Amen*," (2 Cor. i. 20.) the truth itself. And he came down from heaven to bear witness of the truth in heavenly things; and all his testimony is true, and he sealed it with his sacred blood, (John viii. 12---19: xviii. 37, 38.) It was "by him, the first-born of every creature, that God made the worlds. He is before all things, and by him all things consist." (John i. 3; Col. i. 15—19.)

These appear fit terms for the great Visitor to use, speaking of himself, when he is going to tell them of the real state of their religion, so contrary to pure



holiness and practice, and having no support but their own vanity and presumption.

Ver. 15. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert cold or hot, &c.*] The religion, to which by the grace of God we are called, should be seated in the heart and affections. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Such is the summary description of it by its great Founder. And, agreeably to this, St. Paul defines it to be “Faith working by love,” (Gal. v. 6.) In the warm-hearted, therefore, and in those, who from a sense of duty subdue their cold selfish feelings, and encourage in themselves the growth of zealous and grateful piety, and of warm charity, this religion must be expected to flourish most abundantly; and we must suppose that our Lord would be pleased to see his servants of this description—*hot* rather than *cold*. But by the *cold*, in this passage, seem to be meant, not persons devoid of all warm feelings and affections, but who having their passions absorbed by worldly objects, have hitherto been cold to religious affection. But of such persons there is hope and expectation that the time may come, when, from experience of the vanity of mere worldly pursuits, they may listen to the suggestions of the Spirit, and turn their affections to their proper objects, God, and his works and promises, and his servants. These, though cold to religion for the present, have still a way open to salvation.

But between these two classes, there is one of an intermediate description, containing persons, who professing themselves Christians, take no interest in the concerns of their religion. Supposing themselves rich in the merits of their Redeemer, or, (in what is more common and much worse,) in their



own fancied merits, they sink into a lifeless indifference and inactivity respecting the main object and business of their lives. This must disgust that zealous and kind Master who suffered voluntarily so much for them. Of this character seem to be these Laodiceans, wilfully blind to their situation and their duties; whom, in their present state of unconcern and presumption their Saviour nauseates, and calls to a repentance which shall open their eyes, and excite them to zeal and activity, to a desire of the true riches, “Faith working by love,” and of the white raiment, the righteousness of the saints. (See Notes, ch. ii. 8, and iii. 4.)

Ver. 20. *I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*] The kingdom of Christ is described, as “a feast to all people,” (Isa. xxv. 6; Matt. viii. 11.) He is the bread of life, and none who come to him shall hunger or thirst, (John vi. 35; Rev. vii. 16.) Yet if Christ prepares the Supper, it may be said, why is he represented as standing at the door, and knocking for admittance? This is agreeable to the office he bears in the allegory, or parable, (Luke xii. 36—38.) He is the Bridegroom, and his servants sit in *his* house to a late hour, waiting his arrival, when, after the eastern customs, “he cometh and knocketh,” and they open to him, and he maketh them sit down to meat with him. See also John xiv. 23, which tends also to illustrate this passage.

Ver. 21. *To sit with me in my throne.*] The throne of eastern potentates is so ample, as to admit persons highly favoured to sit upon it beside their king, (Lud. de Dieu.) To “sit with Christ in his throne,” implies the possession of the highest dignity and honour; and as such it seems to be re-

served to the close of this vision, as the most glorious exaltation of the Christian conqueror. Yet, magnificent as this promised station may appear, it will be found to harmonize exactly with other passages in scripture. Our Lord's seat is represented to be upon the throne of God, "at the right-hand of the Father," (Heb. viii. 1; Matt. xxvi. 64;) and he hath "prepared a place" for his true servants, that "where he is, there may they be also," (John xiv. 8; xvii. 24.) They are "heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ," "and with him they are to *reign*," (Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 12.) These splendid rewards are to be obtained only through Christ, and by those who follow him faithfully, in his career of spiritual warfare, and of victory, "even as he also hath overcome."

## PART II.

## SECTION I.

*Representation of the Divine Glory in Heaven.*

## CHAPTER iv.

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me: which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the Spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and

power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Ver. 1. *After this I looked, &c.*] Our received translation of this passage does not appear perfectly right. *ΜΕΤΑ ΤΑΥΤΑ* might more properly be rendered "*after these things.*" For the reader will find, at the end of the verse, these words, *μετα ταυτα*, repeated, and with plain reference to the same words at the beginning. On which account the translation should run thus: "I will shew thee the things which must happen *after these things.*" The propriety of this alteration will be more fully seen by turning to chap. i. 19, and the note there.

The view of the *actual* state of the seven Churches, as revealed by the all-seeing Lord, is now completed; and the prophet is called to behold a new scene, from another station, disclosing events which are to happen to the Church of Christ *in future*. And so called, he is immediately rapt in the Spirit. Now this inspiration need not have been mentioned, had the first vision been still proceeding; the Spirit, necessary to the comprehension of that vision, having already possessed him: "I was in the Spirit," (ch. i. 10.) This was therefore a second and separate inspiration, necessary to prepare him for a subsequent and distinct vision. The best commentators seem perfectly agreed in this opinion.

*A door was opened in heaven.*] Such an opening in heaven is described by the prophet Ezekiel, leading to the visions which he beheld, (ch. i. 1. x. 1.) Such an opening also appeared to the Baptist, (Matt. iii. 16;) and to Stephen, (Acts vii. 56.) Daubuz.

Ver. 2. *A throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*] It is observed by Vitringa, that this

vision of the Almighty on his heavenly throne has resemblance to visions seen and represented by other prophets; by Moses, (Exod. xiv. 9, 10;) by Isa. (vi. 1, 2;) by Ezekiel (i. 1, 26;) by Daniel (vii. 9.) There *is a general* resemblance, but at the same time such dissimilarity, as shows that they are not copied from each other, but from one common original, varied by circumstances, as portraits of the same person will appear, when drawn by different hands and in varied attitudes. By comparing all these together, it will clearly appear, that the Personage here sitting in nameless majesty is the great Jehovah, the God of Israel, and of the universe. The jasper, to which his splendid appearance is likened, is described by Pliny to be a pellucid watery gem, (Nat. Hist. lib. xxvii.) The glory of the Lord is likened, in another passage of the Apocalypse, to the jasper, where this gem is further described by the epithet *κρυσταλλιζων*, (ch. xxi. 11,) it is “clear as crystal;” whence it has been supposed to be what we now call the diamond, (Schleusner.) The clear brilliancy of the divine appearance seems to have suggested this likeness at first to the prophet’s mind: but there was a fiery tinge in it, such as is represented in Ezekiel i. 27; on which account probably he added to the description the mention of the Sardine stone, which is stated by Pliny to have a fiery glow.

Ver. 3. *A rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*] In the vision of Ezekiel, (ch. i. 27, 28,) there is a throne, and one sitting, and around him “as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about, as the appearance of the Bow, that is in the clouds, on the day of rain.” Such was this circular glory, for the bow would be seen in a circular form, as Vitringa rightly observes,



if the whole of it could come into view, at the same time, in our hemisphere. Its general appearance was of the green lustre of the emerald.

Ver. 4. *And round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats; and upon the seats four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*] Thus far the likeness of this vision to those of the Old Testament, which represent the “majesty of the Lord of Hosts, the glory of the God of Israel,” is apparent. But this circular session of the twenty-four elders is, as Vitranga observes, of a character and description entirely new. Though indeed we may note some intimation of such a session surrounding the Almighty in Isaiah xxiv. 23, where it is said, “the Moon shall be confounded, and the Sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and Jerusalem, and before his ancients (or elders, *πρεσβυτεροι*. Sept.) gloriously.”

This circumstance has occasioned much doubt and difficulty in the explication of these agents in the scene before us. It must be universally agreed that these four-and-twenty elders are persons very supremely distinguished: for they sit on thrones (*Θρονοι*) in the presence of the Almighty, with crowns of gold on their heads, and clothed in the pure shining raiment (“the righteousness of the saints”) worn by the Saviour and his followers. Yet they are not angels; for they have nothing in common with those heavenly inhabitants, excepting their heavenly ministration; and the great body of angels is distinct from them, for they are afterwards added to the scene. (See ver. 6 of this chapter, and ver. 11 of the next.) It has therefore been commonly supposed that they represent human beings, but of what description, has not been so generally agreed.



It is their office, as appears throughout this divine book, to surround the throne, and sing praises to the great Creator. They perform the part in heaven, which is allotted to the priesthood on earth; and they are in number twenty-four, like the courses of the priests under the Law. By some commentators they have been supposed to belong to the Old Testament, by others to the New, exclusively; but they may belong to both, (so Mede,) for all are saved by the same Christian efficacy; and the purer worship of the one is typified and prefigured in the more formal services of the other.

The most important information which we seem to derive from this extraordinary exhibition is perhaps this,—and it is most consolatory,—that in the future heavenly life, human beings, of tried and superior faith and virtue, shall be admitted to a near approach to the glory and happiness of the heavenly throne.

The white raiment of these elders, (see ch. iii. 4, 5; vii. 9, 14; xix. 8, 14,) and their crowns of gold, that is, in the plainer language of scripture, “crowns of righteousness, of life, of glory,” (see 1 Cor. ix. 25; 2 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Pet. v. 4,) very strongly imply that they are human beings, or of “the redeemed from earth.”

It may be objected to this conclusion, that human beings, even in their glorified state, cannot be entitled to rank before angels in their approach to the heavenly throne. But it will be shown (ver. 6) that beings of the purest angelic nature possess in this scene a site nearer to the throne; and if other angels are not represented as occupying a prior place in this scene, it may be, that the object of it is to represent human salvation completed by the subsequent appearance of the Lamb on the throne; and

that the exaltation of such human beings, who, by following the Redeemer have obtained his promises, makes a necessary part of the scheme. (See ch. ii. 10; iii. 5, 12, 21.) Of this exaltation, strong intimations are given by the inspired writers, “Man is made lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and worship.” (Ps. viii. 5.) “The apostles are to sit on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel.” (Matth. xix. 28.) “Do ye not know,” says St. Paul, “that the saints shall judge the world?” and that “we shall judge angels?” (See also ch. i. ver. 5, of this Revelation; and the note thereon.)

This interpretation seems to be confirmed in the following chapter, where these elders will be seen falling before the Lamb, and singing “thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tribe, and language, and people, and nation.”

Ver. 5. *Lightnings and thunderings.*] With such terrific pomp the majesty of Jehovah appeared at Mount Sinai, and it is frequently so represented in the book of Psalms.

*Seven lamps of fire.*] These are not *λυχνιαί*, as in chap. i. 12, but *λαμπαδες*; not the candlesticks, or receptacles of the lights, but the lights themselves. The same imagery occurs in Zech. iv. 1, 7—10, on which the angel observes, by way of explanation, “Not by might nor by power, but by *my Spirit*, saith the Lord of Hosts.” So that it is in harmony with other passages of prophetic Scripture, as well as with this revelation, that “the seven lamps of fire,” before the heavenly throne, imitated by the seven branched candlestick in the earthly temple, represent the holy Spirit of God. (See note, ch. i. 4.)

Ver. 6. *A sea of glass, like unto crystal.*] In the best manuscripts, as Vitringa has observed, and as

may be seen in Griesbach, the word ὡς is added ; *Και ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θρόνου ὡς Θάλασσα ὑαλινῇ, ὁμοία κρυσταλλῷ*, which may be thus translated,—“ And before the throne, as it were, a sea, glassy, like unto crystal.” All the ancient commentators, down to Primasius, have supposed this glassy sea to have its prototype under the Old Testament, in the great laver, full of water, standing in Solomon’s Temple, called the brazen sea, used for the purification of the priests, (1 Kings vii ; 2 Chron. iv ; Joseph. Antiq. viii. iii. 6—8.) and that this sea thus represented to us under the New Testament, is intended to express that instrument of purification which it introduces, “ the water of holy baptism,” or more properly, that which the baptismal water represents, “ *the blood of the Redeemer* ;” which alone possesses the cleansing efficacy of taking away sin. And Grotius and Mede, followed by other modern commentators, have adopted this interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The learned and indefatigable Vitrिंगa objects to this ; (1st.) that the Laver of the Old Testament was not before the throne, but in the court of the Temple ; but he may be answered, as he himself has answered upon a similar occasion, that in this heavenly exhibition of the throne, the veil is taken away, and the Molten Sea will then appear as here described, “ before the throne.” (2dly.) He asks how a laver of water can properly be called a sea ? or why, if so called, is there no mention of the Laver ? Answ. It is so called in the Old Testament repeatedly, and such a name has sufficient reference to the Laver supposed to contain it. Lastly, he is persuaded that under the name of “ as it were a glassy sea, like unto crystal,” is described the rich transparent pavement, supporting the celestial throne and its surrounding ministers, as described by Ezekiel, ch. i. 22 ; and by Moses, Exod. xxiv. 10 ; and that this kind of pavement is the fittest station for the victorious saints, who are represented in ch. xv. 2, as standing *upon* the glassy sea, not by the side of it.

There is weight in this observation, thus founded upon scriptural allusion ; upon a similitude discovered between the relations of three inspired writers with respect to the same heavenly object. And, in support of the opinion of this able commentator, it may be added,

*And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne were four beasts, full of eyes before and behind.]* By referring to other passages in this sacred book, where mention is made of these *Zwa*, (Ch. v. 6, 14 ; vi. 1, &c. ; vii. 11 ; xv. 7.) it plainly appears, that their station is, as in part here described, “round about the throne.” They encompass it on every side, and are within the encircling body of the Elders. But in this passage, they are said also to be “in the midst of the throne.” “The midst of the throne,” is the position of the great Father, and afterwards (ch. v.) of the Lamb, in union with him, and can only be applied to the *Zwa*, as expressing their very near approach to the throne. Like the cherubim, in the midst of which the God of Israel, under the Old Testament, is represented sitting, they seem to occupy a part of the throne.

But this passage can only be understood by comparing it with similar descriptions of the appearance of the divine glory to mortal eyes, as delivered in the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel. In the former of these prophets, angelic beings, called by him *seraphim*, surround the divine throne, and each of them has six wings, like these in the Apocalypse, and they sing *Holy, Holy, Holy*, in the same manner.

that Saint John, in his description of the heavenly Jerusalem, represents the pavement, or street of the city, to be “of pure gold, as of transparent glass,” (Rev. xxi. 21.); and that Isaiah has applied a similar image to the stones and foundation of the renewed Jerusalem. (Ch. liv. 11.) But yet it cannot, and must not be forgotten, that in the passage before us, St. John calls this object expressly *a sea*, not a *pavement*, and that he describes its situation as “before the throne, not under it; and that afterwards, when he comes to speak of the fountain of the waters of life, issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and irrigating the streets of the city and the tree of life, for the support of the glorified inhabitants, he represents it, as he does the *sea* in the present text, clear, or shining as crystal, (ch. xxii. 1.) All this bespeaks water, and not pavement.



In the vision of Ezekiel, the angelic beings are, like these, four in number; and, together with an human appearance, they have the faces of the four animals to which these in the apocalyptic vision are likened. And Ezekiel has pronounced that the *Zwa*, which he thus saw and described, were *cherubim*, and that he knew them to be such. (See Isaiah, ch. vi.; and Ezekiel, ch. i.)

These two descriptions, though differing from each other in the name, and in some few particulars, are of the same divine original. The variety which seems to distinguish them, is to be accounted for by the difference of the exhibition. The throne, as shown to Isaiah being *stationary*, but, as presented before Ezekiel, *moveable*. But in this apocalyptic vision, they are brought to a closer similitude, by a common measure of comparison resembling them both. This comparison of the three visions, so necessary to the right understanding of the *Zwa* in the Apocalypse, may be seen to advantage in the commentary of Vitringa; and in addition to this, the student may perhaps find some useful observations in my annotations published some years ago, when I was unacquainted with Vitringa's notions on this subject.<sup>1</sup>

*Full of eyes.*] The eye, as created in man, is a wonderful inlet of knowledge and intelligence. These angelic ministers, surrounding the throne, possess them without number, and in superior perfection. It is the same in Ezekiel's cherubim; and

<sup>1</sup> Our translators have been very unfortunate in their choice of the word "*beast*," as representative of the Greek *Zwov*; for however inoffensive this term may be in its primary sense, it is highly displeasing in its secondary and usual acceptation; and therefore most unfitly applied to a glorious inhabitant of heaven. Nor even in its primary sense is it a correct translation; for thus it is opposed to men, birds and fishes, whereas the original word *Zwa* comprehends all living creatures.

the throne there described being moveable, the wheels on which it moves are also “full of eyes,” and animated with the same spirit and knowledge as the angelic beings.

Ver. 7. *And the first beast was like a lion.*] The four *Zwa*, or living creatures, had some resemblance in their aspect to four animals upon earth. The first to the lion; the second to the *Μοσχός*; which word in the Greek Scriptures, is used to express not only a calf, but the same animal also when arriving towards its maturity, and thus signifies a young bull or steer. The third is described as approaching most to an human appearance; though all of them, as seen by Ezekiel, “had the likeness of a man.” The fourth resembled an eagle with expanded wings.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is no subject of discussion in the Apocalypse which has afforded greater diversity, and I may add, greater absurdity of interpretation, than this of the *Τεσσαρα Ζωα*. The most ancient is that which supposes them to represent the four gospels, or the writers of them. That they represented the four gospels is just as probable, as that the twenty-four elders represented the books of the Old Testament; an absurdity which has long ceased to be maintained. In Augustine’s time it was contended to which of the evangelists each of the symbols was applicable. (Tom. i. de consensu Evang. c. 6.) The distinctions then settled they still retain, in the imaginary pictures or statues which are made to represent them. A subsequent opinion arose, that they were the four archangels; but no such four archangels are commemorated in legitimate and divine Scripture, and to find any mention of such a body, we must go to the apocryphal books, or to those of later Jewish authority.

Grotius interprets them to signify apostles, and he arbitrarily fixes upon Peter, James the Less, Matthew and Paul, as so improbably distinguished. By many commentators, the living creatures are supposed to represent the whole body of Christian believers in the four quarters of the Globe: but to this it has been properly objected, that in the scene before us, the living creatures are evidently preferred before the elders, whom these same commentators suppose to represent the Christian priesthood: for the living creatures are nearest to the throne, they lead in the ministration, and are



All these animals have a dignified aspect, and the cherub of holy Scripture was generally repre-

followed by the elders; and when St. John is to become a nearer spectator of the throne, he is called up to the living creatures, and by them. (Ch. vi.) If therefore the twenty-four elders represent the Christian priesthood, or its ministers of any description, or the body of Christian people, this interpretation cannot be just.

Vitringa has considered at large, and ably refuted most of these opinions; and has advanced as his own, that the living creatures represent in general the teachers and ministers of the Church, most favoured by divine grace, most distinguished by their powers, and the effects of their ministry in all ages—apostles, apostolical men, fathers of the Church, reformers, &c. It is surprising, that he had already supposed the persons thus described to represent the twenty-four elders: they cannot belong to both bodies, which are so essentially distinguished from each other. And it appears, that he was disposed to account the four living creatures to be of angelic nature, but that he was unwilling to deem them angels, because, as it appeared to him, the living creatures and the elders are contradistinguished from the angels, making a separate chorus from them. (Ch. vii. 2; v. 9, 10—12.) But the cherubim, as we have endeavoured to show above, are not angels, the messengers of God, as the name *Ἀγγελος* implies, but superior beings, of angelic nature, as distinguished from man, the inseparable attendants upon the divine throne and state.

It is an objection also of Vitringa's, repeated by Archbishop Newcome, that the living creatures profess themselves to be redeemed to God by the blood of the Lamb. (Ch. v. 9.) But it is the office of these ministering spirits to sing the praises of God without ceasing; praises consequently not in their own name and behalf only, but in those of all other created beings; as in this particular instance they do, in behalf of the universal church of Christ. They unite their voices with those of the elders, to whom, as ministers from the Christian church on earth, this song more peculiarly belongs. (Ch. iv. 9; v. 8—14.) And this objection, arising from the supposed redemption of the living creatures, is in a great measure removed, by the restoration of the text from the MSS. of highest authority. For in *ch. v. 10*, instead of *εποιησας ἡμας τω Θεω κ. τ. λ.* we read *εποιησας αυτους κ. τ. λ.* and instead of *Βασιλευσμεν*, we have *Βασιλευσουσιν*. (See Griesbach.)

The last interpretation of the *τεσσαρα Ζωα* which I shall notice, is that which has been adopted by the ingenious and learned Joseph Mede, and his numerous followers in this kingdom,—that they represent the four standards or ensigns of the four divisions of

sented with a head like the ox or steer. The Hebrew word signifying cherub, having also that meaning. (Calmet.)

Ver. 8. *They rest not, &c.*] We have seen that the living creatures of the Apocalypse, are, like those in Isaiah and Ezekiel, cherubim or seraphim; the most exalted of created beings—the nearest to the throne of the almighty King. And to him they minister incessantly, proclaiming his praise and

the camp of Israel, bearing the pictured figures of the emblematic animals described in this passage of the Apocalypse. But when we enquire for the authorities upon which this interpretation is founded, we find that there are no such ensigns mentioned in Holy Scripture, and that the whole is derived, as Lowman says, from an uncertain Jewish tradition; and a tradition, we may add, that cannot be reconciled with those parts of Scripture to which reference is made in its support; (viz. Numb. ii.; Deut. xxxiii.) This will easily be seen, by comparing them together. Le Clerc, in his observations on Hammond, who had been one of the first to mention these ensigns, calls them extravagant fancies, in which he wonders that the learned author could acquiesce. And he adds, that “there is no ground whatever for such allusion, but what is said by the rabbins, who are less acquainted with what was done of old time than we;” and whose invention he calls *absurd*. “Why then,” says he, “did he believe them?”

But, if such authority should be allowed, and if it should be conceded, that standards of such description did bear a part in the Israelite encampment round the tabernacle; yet, their station in that camp could not be the same in respect to the throne within the tabernacle, as that of the living creatures here described: for the standards are *exterior* to the tabernacle; the throne, where the living creatures are placed, is *interior*. It is in the veiled part, the holy of holies, where was the seat of the divinity, between the cherubim, as Mede himself has stated. (Works, p. 439.) And it is not the exterior, but the interior of the tabernacle or temple, which, as he says, is exhibited to view in the apocalyptic visions. But, if it were otherwise, and we were to advert only to the outside of the tabernacle, even there we find that the tribes commissioned to bear the standards were not those nearest to the tabernacle. For the tribe of Levi was expressly appointed to surround and guard the tabernacle, in exclusion of the other tribes.

glory, and everduring dominion. And in the remaining verses of this chapter, a noble specimen is exhibited of the divine worship in heaven, at once a pattern and incitement to man in his worship on earth. The cherubim begin the song of praise, the ministering spirits redeemed from amongst men, quit their thrones, abase their crowns, and, prostrate before the throne, join in the chorus of a creation hymn.

We have here presented before us a splendid exhibition of the Deity, attended by his ministering spirits; but the scene is not yet complete. In the chapter immediately succeeding, the Lamb, the Son of God, in his gracious character of Redeemer, takes his station “in the midst of the throne;” and an innumerable company of angels are seen to encompass the surrounding body of the elders, and the living creatures, and are added to the chorus, which receives a further increase when (ch. xiv. 1; xv. 2.) the innumerable company of “the redeemed on earth” are presented to their Redeemer, and sing the new song before the throne. The whole representation is wonderfully sublime, and admirably calculated to exalt religious feeling. One of the finest parts of our Church service, the opening of the *Te Deum*, seems to have been formed principally upon it.

## PART II.

## SECTION II.

*The sealed Book ; the Lamb, who opens it ; and  
the Praises sung by the heavenly Choir.*

## CHAP. V.

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not : behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof : for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ;

10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests : and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ;

12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

THE most judicious of the commentators are so generally agreed in the exposition of this chapter, that we shall have occasion to do little more than to report, in an abridged form, the result of their observations.

Ver. 1. *A book, written within, and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.*] The books of the ancients, especially in the East, were rolled up like our large maps and plans, not folded.

So, “the roll of the book,” when opened for inspection, is said to be “*spread*,” (Ezek. ii. 10.) and it was closed by rolling up, βιβλίον ελίσσομενον. (Rev. vi. 14.) And it was kept secret and secured from inspection, by having a seal or seals affixed to it.

Some of the prophecies delivered to Daniel, (ch. viii—xii.) are said to be sealed, or closed, or shut up for many days. Of this description are the prophecies contained in this book in the hand of the Almighty Father. No one could read them; the book was full of them, and its contents were withheld from inspection by seven seals, that is, an abundance of seals, showing the difficulty of arriving at the knowledge of the things written in it.

Ver. 3. *No man in heaven, nor on earth, neither under the earth was able to open the book, &c.*] The word Ουδεις, would be more properly translated *no*



*one*; no being throughout the whole creation, containing angels as well as men. The power of opening this divine book, depended upon *worthiness*, as appears by verses 2d and 4th; and no created being was found sufficiently worthy.

Ver. 4. *I wept much.*] The tenderness of feeling producing tears under such a disappointment, is agreeable to the character of St. John. He would lament the loss of the prophetic information, knowing how consolatory it might be to the infant church of Christ in its then afflicted state; and penetrated with grief, that among all the creatures of God, none could be found worthy to obtain it.

Ver. 5. *The Lion of the tribe of Juda.*] Under the symbol of a lion, the superiority of the tribe of Judah was predicted. (Gen. xlix. 9.) This prophecy had a partial completion in the person of king David, who is an acknowledged type of Christ. Jesus, in his human nature, was “of the house and lineage of David;” but in his divine nature, he was more. He, who was before all worlds, by whom the Father made this world, and decreed its redemption, was the cause and origin, and, as it were, *the Root* of the spiritual conquests achieved by the Son of David, at the same time that he was a branch of that tree. Isaiah therefore calls him not only the branch, but the Root also of Jesse, (ch. xi. 10.); and St. Paul quotes the passage, applying it to Christ. (Rom. xv. 12.)

Ver. 6. *In the midst of the throne, &c.*] The cherubim were represented as “stationed in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne;” but the expression here is “in the midst” only; and the station is further explained, by adding “in the



midst of the four living creatures and of the elders.” This is the inner, and central, and most dignified situation, to which the Son only can have access; “far above all principalities and powers, at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” So in Rev. xxii. 1, this station is called “the throne of God, and of the Lamb.”

*A Lamb.*] Our Lord Jesus Christ, for whom alone this supreme station could be designed, is frequently represented under this symbol of innocence, led to suffer at the altar for the sins of mankind, as prefigured in the daily service of the Temple. He appears as a suffering Victim, the character which endears him above all others to sinful and mortal man; and which, thoroughly considered, is found to agree perfectly with that more splendid description of him above, where he is styled “the Lion of the tribe of Judah;” for it was in this low and suffering form, that he fought against the enemies of human salvation, and overcame them. The prophecies of the Old Testament, describing the Messiah, sometimes as a despised Sufferer, sometimes as an irresistible and triumphant Conqueror, appeared dark and irreconcilable, until the event showed the truth and consistency of both predictions, when “the Lord of glory” effected the salvation of the world, under the character of an innocent, unresisting victim.

*Αρνιον*, here translated “*a Lamb*,” is a diminutive from *Αρς*, *Αρνος*, *Agnus*, *Agnellus*. (Schleusner.) As such, it is expressive of tenderness and love. St. John uses it in this sense, as the words of our Saviour to Peter, *βοσκει τα Αρνια μου*. Feed my lambs, my beloved little lambs, my Christian flock, for whom I have suffered. (John xxi. 15.) Here he is himself the suffering, sacrificed Lamb.

*As it had been slain, having seven horns and seven*

eyes, &c.] The word *εσφαγμενον* implies that the Lamb appeared with a wounded neck and throat, as if smitten at the altar, as a Victim, “as a Lamb for the slaughter,” *επι σφανην*. (Acts viii. 32; Isa. liii. 7.)

Seven is a number expressive of universality, fullness, and perfection, (see ch. i. 4.); and as a horn, in the figurative language of Scripture, is emblematical of power, so the seven horns of the Lamb signify his omnipotence, as the seven eyes do his omnipresence and omniscience. “All power,” says our Lord to his disciples, “is given to me in heaven and in earth.” And this he said immediately after he had vanquished the formidable enemies of man, Sin and Death, under this form of a victim. (Matth. xxviii. 18.)

Ver. S. *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials, full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*] This adoration is paid to the Lamb; and, uniting with many other passages of holy writ, authorises that worship of praise and thanksgiving, which Christians of almost all descriptions offer up to the second person of the Godhead, the Redeemer of man. The cherubim, as before, lead in the song of praise; the elders unite in it, bearing every one of them harps, and vials of odours, or incense. These are borne by the elders only, as the masculine *εκαστος* shows; and as most appropriate to their form and to their office, as “priests to God.”

The Vial, *φιαλη*, was a patera or basin, in which were deposited before the altar the offerings of meal, or incense, according to the law: the latter being a compound of various sweets and odours, (Exod. xxx. 34; xxxvii. 29; Lev. xvi. 12.) was probably intended to be expressed by the word *Θυμαμα-*

των; for the offering of this incense was accompanied by the prayers of the congregation, (Luke i. 10; Ps. cxli. 2.) which are here called “the prayers of the saints.” At the dedication of the tabernacle, the twelve elders or princes of Israel, offered each of them a golden spoon or patera, full of incense. (Numb. vii. 10, 14, &c.) The elders here make a similar offering to be deposited before the altar of the throne. (See Daubuz and Vitringa.)

Ver. 9. *A new song.*] *New*, because the sufferings and subsequent glorification of Christ, had furnished a subject of joyful exultation and song unknown to former ages; unknown to the inhabitants of heaven before this disclosure of it under the New Testament. (Matth. xiii. 35; 1 Pet. i. 12, 20.)

*Kings and priests.*] See note, ch. i. 6.

Ver. 10. *Ten thousand times, &c.*] “An innumerable company of angels:” (Heb. xii. 22.) and “let all the angels of God worship *him*.” (Heb. i. 6.)

Ver. 13. *Blessing, and honour, and glory, &c.*] The received translation, by leaving out the article which is found in the Greek, in this and similar passages, has not attained the sense of the original, which implies not only that praise, honour, power, should be ascribed to God and to the Redeemer *generally*, but *the* particular and supreme praise, &c. which belong only to the God of heaven. In the Lord’s prayer, the article is translated with proper effect, “thine is *the* kingdom, *the* power, and *the* glory;” and so it should be here. To this we may add, that the word *Εὐλογία*, does not seem properly rendered by the word *blessing*. *Blessing* descends from the superior to the inferior. (See Heb. vii. 7.) I would substitute the word *praise*.

## PART II.

## SECTION III.

*The opening of the first Seal.*

## CHAP. vi. ver. 1, 2.

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

*And I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, "Come and see."]* The voice of the Lord from heaven appears, in many passages of Scripture to be a glorious and terrible sound, like thunder: and to this it was compared in John xii. 28. In the representation now before us, the voice comes from the throne, from the cherubim "in the midst of it, and surrounding it." And it calls St. John to come near to the throne, there to see more certainly and commodiously the symbols prophetic of future events, as they appear in a sort of coloured delineation, upon the opening of each seal.

Ver. 2. *And I saw, and behold a white horse.*] The horse is a noble animal, employed by the Eastern nations principally in war; so that in scriptural language, a horseman and a warrior are used synonymously. The description of the war-horse in the book of Job, is highly poetical. (Ch. xxxix. 19—26.)

The white horse, in the passage before us, is a war-horse, for he carries his rider "*to conquer.*"

In a vision of the prophet Zechariah, (ch. i.) a person is seen "riding on a red horse, (*πυρρός*, flame-coloured,) and behind him were there red horses, speckled and white." These appear, in the sequel, to represent the progress of heavenly angels, in military array, sent forth through the nations at the time of the Jewish captivity. The red horses, which lead the array, portend war and slaughter; such as had occasioned the captivity. The white horses concluding the procession, denote, as the context shows, the peace and happiness which were to succeed. The speckled, or party-coloured horses, express the intermediate transition from suffering to happiness.

In the sixth chapter of the same prophet, there is a similar exhibition of four chariots, drawn by red, black, white, and party-coloured horses; which are explained by the angel to signify "the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth." And they go forth in the same character; the black horses denoting mourning and woe, to the north country, to Babylon, where the Jews were then in bondage. But "the white go forth after them," representing the deliverance they were to obtain from the victorious Cyrus.

From this application of the imagery of horses in Scripture, it may appear, that a man on horseback, in scriptural vision, represents the going forth of some power divinely commissioned to effect changes upon earth: and that the character of the change is to be collected from the colour of the horse; the red or flame-coloured, denoting war and slaughter; the black, mourning and woe; the white, victory, and peace, and happiness.



To assist us further in the interpretation of the white horse, we have a passage in this same book of the Apocalypse, (ch. xix. 11—17.) where, a white horse is introduced with the very same expression, “*behold, a white horse*; and he that sate upon him was called faithful and true; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself; and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

No one conversant in scriptural prophecy, can doubt for a moment to whom this description belongs. The glorious Rider on *this white horse*, is manifestly the only-begotten Son of God; who here in person, (that is, with more ample manifestation of his overruling power,) leads his Church to victory. But under this first seal, it is not so certainly apparent, that the rider on the white horse is the same glorious Personage; for he is not distinguished by the same glorious attributes. He has simply a crown and a bow: the bow is not a weapon or appendage peculiar to Christ. And the elders, representing the ministers of Christ, have crowns, which are promised likewise to all faithful, victorious Christians, who in this vision, (ch. xix.) are represented following their Lord *on white horses*. “As the Father had sent him, so he sent them into the

world," (John xvii. 18.); all which circumstances being considered, we may be inclined to conclude, that, by the going forth of this white horse, the progress of the Christian religion seems to be intended; its progress in primitive purity, at the time when its heavenly Founder left the world in person, and commissioned his apostles to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" adding, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The divine religion goes out crowned, having the divine favour resting upon it, armed spiritually against its foes, and destined to be victorious in the end.<sup>1</sup>

*He went forth conquering, and to conquer.*] Two periods of time seem here to be designated: the first, when the Christian religion, preached in purity

<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of the white horse, is supported by the authority of the most distinguished commentators, ancient and modern. Andreas Cæsariensis records it as adopted generally by the ancient writers before his time; and he quotes Methodius as referring the first seal to the preaching of the apostles. He is followed by Arethas, Victorinus, Primasius, &c. Of the learned moderns, Grotius, Hammond, Mede, Durham, Forbes, Daubuz, Vitringa, Hales, Lowman, Faber, in a greater or less degree express the same notion. Gravius, quoted by Pole and Viega, a Jesuit of the 16th century, seem to be the first writers who applied this seal to the Roman empire: they were followed by Jurieu, in the 17th century. Mede, though desirous of referring all the seals to ancient Rome, had the judgment to see that this seal cannot be so applied. But some of his disciples, having followed him in his application of the remaining four first seals to Roman emperors, have ventured at length to give to this seal also the same kind of interpretation. They have supposed the rider on the white horse to be Titus or Vespasian, armed as instruments of the divine vengeance on the Jewish nation. But the character of the *white* horse is not vengeful warfare, but victorious innocence, and blissful peace. Innumerable are the solid objections to this interpretation: they who wish to see them at large, may consult Vitringa, who has ably refuted almost every other exposition of the first seal, but that which applies it to the early and apostolical progress of the Christian Church.

by the apostles, overcame the powers of darkness and all human opposition, and establishing itself in the world, "*went forth conquering.*" The second, when after a long warfare, during which this holy religion is corrupted, debased, and deformed, by the machinations of the enemy, it is at length seen to regain its primitive freedom and purity, and to overcome all opposition. These two periods are plainly distinguished in the visions of Daniel. The first is that of the "stone, cut out of the mountain without hands," and representing the Church of Christ in its infantine state, when it begins to conquer, by smiting the idolatrous kingdoms of the world. (Dan. ii. 34.) The second is that of the mountain: when this "stone becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth." (Dan. ii. 35.) The latter period is represented in the nineteenth chapter of the Apocalypse, being only alluded to in the passage now before us; the prime object of which is to show the religion of Christ going forth in its purity, and in the power divinely conferred upon it. Its heavenly colour is as yet unstained by worldly corruption; its beginnings are pure; and pure it must be, when it shall conquer at the last.

The commencement of the time occupied by this seal, may be dated from our Saviour's ascension, when he gave his final commission to the disciples to go forth with his doctrines and heavenly proclamation to the world. The duration of this period cannot be so precisely ascertained, because the change in the Church, from original purity to corrupt doctrine, worship, and morals, was gradual. But, generally speaking, we may admit the three first centuries of the Christian æra to have been of this purer description.

## PART II.

## SECTION IV.

*The opening of the second Seal.*

CHAP. vi. ver. 3, 4.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

4 And there went out another horse *that was red*: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

Ver. 4. *And there went out another horse that was red.*] The second seal being broken, another sheet unrolls, and the representation of another horse and rider appears; but the colour, which in the white horse was expressive of purity, innocence, and peace, is changed; thus denoting a change of character in the times prefigured. The horse is now *red*, or more properly *fire-coloured*, (*πυρροος*, from *πυρ*,) which is an epithet of colour, applied to horses by the classical writers. (See Theocriti Idyll. xv. 51.) The angel, in Zech. i. 8, rides upon a horse of this description; and of this colour is also “the ancient serpent, the devil,” who “comes *wrathfully to war against the saints.*” (Rev. xii. 3, 9, 17.)

*To take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword.*] To this horseman, whose character, denoted by the colour of his horse, is fiery and vengeful, it

is allotted, “to take peace from the earth,” or, as the more correct readings have it, “to take the peace of the earth,” to take away that peace under which the white horse had been given to bless the earth; and to place in its stead hatred, variance, wrath, strife, to such a degree as to cause battles and slaughter, not of nation against nation, which have always been waged, but of “brethren and companions” among themselves, for such is the force of *να αλληλους σφαζωσι*.

Our Lord established his religion in peacefulness, and commissioned it to conquer, or prosper in the world by peace; and yet he foretold, very remarkably, that peace should not altogether ensue. “Think not,” says he, “that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send *peace*, but a *sword*,” (Matt. x. 34;) which St. Luke, in the parallel passage represents by the word *division*. In which sense our Lord also declares that he is “come to send *fire* on the earth,” (Luke xii. 49.) Not that it was his wish or intention, as the commentators observe, that such dire and antichristian consequences should ensue; but such effects he foreknew would arise from the passions and prejudices of sinful men. Such a scene was to follow the first pure age of Christianity, when a fiery zeal, without knowledge, without charity, should instigate professed Christians to take away peace; and from divisions among themselves to proceed to mutual persecution, war, and slaughter. Such a scene, it is well known, did follow the pure age of primitive Christianity; and the pictured prophecy of this second seal being found to agree so entirely with the prediction of Christ above-mentioned, in the use of the same figurative expressions, (such as, *fire*, *sword*, *taking away peace*,) seems to point to the same period of time; a time when the heavenly religion,



which under the first seal had proceeded in the white array of innocence and peace, became so degenerate as to lose its heavenly colour, and to assume the wrathful, persecuting hue of the *fiery-coloured dragon*. Neglectful of charity, the bond of peace, the Christian leaders divided among themselves, and appealed to the sword, and involved themselves in the guilt and disgrace of mutual slaughter!

But whence are we to date this lamentable change? May we fix its commencement from the close of the second century; when the rulers of the Western Church, and the wise and moderate Irenæus, were seen to interpose in tumults of this tendency, and to exhort the furious bishop of Rome to cultivate Christian peace? (*τα της ειρηνης φρονειν*, Euseb. Hist. Eccl. v. 24.) The fiery, intolerant character which marks this seal, was indeed too visible in these transactions; but the hue, from white to fire colour, changed gradually. The persecuting hand of the common enemy, of the heathen still in power, restrained this factious spirit for a time; and although, previous to the Dioclesian persecution in 302, there were shameful *divisions* among the Christians, which Eusebius mentions with a becoming mixture of indignation and tenderness, (Eccl. Hist. viii. 1,) yet the change cannot be deemed complete, so as to produce the full character of this second seal, till a later period.

But when the Roman empire became Christian; when a Christian emperor bore the sword; (with which in the imagery of this seal the Christian power seems invested;) when, relieved from the terrors of pagan persecution, the Christians became possessed of civil influence, their animosities increased. Worldly prosperity is corruptive; and instead of those halcyon days of peace and happi-

ness, which the Church promised to itself from the acquisition of power, a period succeeded from which history is seen to date its degeneracy and corruption. (See the Notes to the concluding verses of chap. vii.) This degeneracy was at this time manifested in the mutual enmities and feuds of Christians; which were so notorious in the fourth century, that a contemporary author reports of them, (with some hyperbole perhaps, for he was a pagan,) that “the hatred of Christians to each other exceeded the fury of wild beasts against men.” (Amm. Marcell. lib. xxii. c. 5.) This was a great change from the times of Tertullian, in the second century, when the pagans made a very different report of Christian community. “See,” said they, “how these Christians love each other!” (Tertull. Apol. c. 39.) It is a change powerfully expressed by *fire colour* succeeding to *white*. The contests for power and promotion among Christian bishops and rulers were not concluded without mutual slaughter; and in the controversies occasioned by the schisms of the Donatists and of the Arians, many thousands of Christians perished by the weapons of each other.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The most ancient commentators on the Apocalypse, as reported by Andreas Cæsariensis, Arethas, &c., supposed the second seal to be a continuation of the History of the Church, as begun under the first seal, and to prefigure the times of apostolical men and martyrs who succeeded to the apostles in the government of it. This bears some resemblance to the exposition of it given above; but so far as the successors of the apostles walked in their steps, they clearly belong to the first seal.

The commentators, who had already considered the first seal as descriptive of the rule of certain Roman emperors, could not fail to apply this seal to a continuation of the same history. And here they have been supported by the able concurrence of Joseph Mede, whose exposition of this seal is thus adopted and exhibited by Bishop Newton, the most popular writer among his followers. “The second seal or period is noted for war and slaughter, and is proclaimed by the second living creature, who was like an ox, and had his station in the west. This second period commenceth with Trajan, who came from the west, being a Spaniard by birth, and

(See Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. cent. iv. and v.) The evil continued to increase until it produced a further

was the first foreigner who was elevated to the imperial throne. In his reign, and that of his successor Adrian, there were horrid wars and slaughters, and especially between the rebellious Jews and the Romans." The bishop then proceeds to show, from the histories of Dion, Eusebius, and Orosius, that in these rebellious conflicts many hundred thousands of men perished. And he remarks upon these bloody transactions, that "the Jews and the Romans, both the persecutors of Christians, were remarkably made the dreadful executioners of divine vengeance upon one another. The *great sword* and the *red horse* are expressive emblems of this slaughtering and bloody period; and the proclamation for slaughter is fitly made by a creature like an ox that is destined for slaughter. This period continued during the reigns of Trajan and his successors, by blood or adoption, about ninety-five years."

Upon this interpretation I shall only observe, that the slaughter here described is not of that kind which Mede himself justly observes to be required, in order to fulfil the emblem in the text. It is not what he calls an *αλληλοσφαγια*, the fruit of civil contention, but the attempted vengeance of a conquering nation upon insurgents by them deemed rebels. Nor can these occurrences, bloody and murderous as they are, be justly said to "take peace from the earth," where there was no peace before; for the wars of the Romans against such revolted nations, were continually waging in some, and generally in many, quarters of their empire; and our Lord had prophetically spoken of such wars as being in the usual and *necessary* course of events—"for such things," says he, "must needs be," (Mark xiii. 7.)

The earth specified in the text, is the *Christian Church on earth*, in contradistinction to the *Church in Heaven*, (ch. xii. 13.) Though violently persecuted by the Jews and Gentiles, it had peace within itself—peace bequeathed to it by its divine Saviour, (John xiv. 27,) and which it enjoyed in spiritual perfection, so long as it conducted itself by his precepts and example. But when it forsook the white vesture of innocence and righteousness, exchanging it for the fiery hue of the dragon, then these lamentable deeds, this *αλληλοσφαγια* ensued.

Durham, who is one of those who applied this seal to the Christian Church, has pointed out passages in the Apocalypse, where, as in chap. iii. 10, by *ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* the Christian Church, visible and militant on earth, is signified.

The grounds upon which a part of the prophecy of this second seal is supposed to be fulfilled, by the ox stationed in the west, and by Trajan having come from that quarter, have been examined, and shown to be futile, in the Notes to chap. iv. ver. 7.

change from bad to worse, which will appear under the next seal.

## PART II.

### SECTION V.

#### *The opening of the third Seal.*

CHAP. vi. ver. 5, 6.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Ver. 5. *Lo, a black horse.*] On the opening of this seal another change ensues, and still for the worse—by a colour the very opposite to *white*, a colour denoting mourning and woe, darkness and ignorance.

*He that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.*] The word *Ζυγος*, which is here rendered *a pair of balances*, or scales, I have ventured, in my translation and exposition, to express by the word *yoke*. Because such will be found to be its proper and obvious signification; and none other does it bear in any part of the New Testament. And in the Greek of the Old Testament it has usually this meaning; and whenever it is used in its borrowed and secondary sense, to signify a balance for weighing, or a pair of scales, there is then joined with it some other expression, to point out this particular application of it. Such as *Ζυγος σταθμων*, *Ζυγος δικαιος*, *αδικος*, *ανομος*, *Ροπη Ζυγου*, and the like, without which kind of accompaniment, plainly expressed or understood, it would be taken to signify simply *a yoke*. Now this, in its primary sense, was a short staff with a link or short chain fixed to the middle



of it, by which it was suspended from the pole of a plough, waggon, or chariot, in equipoise. And the pair of beasts were placed *under* it, and their necks attached to it, so that when they came to draw they had each an equal share of the load. This was the principal use of the yoke. But when the beasts were taken from under it, then it was found to hang so evenly balanced, as, by attaching scales to it, to serve the purpose of weighing. But there is no mention of scales, or any reference to the act of weighing in this passage. It is simply Ζυγος. Now this instrument, so employed on the necks of the slaving beasts, was early and very universally considered as the badge and symbol of servitude and slavery. “Thou shalt serve thy brother,” says the patriarch to his eldest son; “and it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his *yoke* (Ζυγον) from off thy neck.” (Gen. xxvii. 40; see also Isa. ix. 4. x. 27; Nah. i. 13; Jer. xxvii. 2—15.) It was under this kind of yoke, or under a staff, beam, or spear, used to represent it, that the nations of antiquity were accustomed to pass their conquered enemies, in token of their *subjugation*.

In the New Testament, Ζυγος is used metaphorically to signify the burden of slavery, (1 Tim. vi. 1,) and more especially to represent the burdensome ceremonies enjoined by the law of Moses, from the observance of which the Christian “law of liberty” had delivered the converts. (Acts xv. 10; Gal. v. 1; James i. 25. ii. 12; Col. ii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 16.) The same application of the word Ζυγος by the Greek fathers, and of the word jugum by those who wrote in Latin, was by them continued. (See Socrat. Hist. i. 11; Euseb. Hist. Eccl.; Grabe Spicileg. sect. ii. p. 24; Augustin. Epist. xix.) From the History of the Church we learn, that attempts were made, at different times, to put a yoke



of superstitious observances on the necks of the disciples ; and every attempt seems to have made some little progress towards the system of slavery. As the stream of Christianity flowed farther from its pure fountain it became more and more corrupt ; as centuries advanced, ignorance and superstition increased ; and unauthorized mortifications and penances, rigorous fastings, vows of celibacy, monkish retirement and austerities, stylitism, the jargon and repetition of prayers not understood, tales of purgatory, pious frauds, and the worship of saints, relics, and images, took the place of pure and simple Christianity : till at length, the book of God being laid aside for legendary tales, and the “ traditions of men,” all these corruptions were collected into a regular system of superstitious oppression, well known by the name of the *Papal yoke*. The Eastern Church kept pace with the Western for some time, in the introduction of burdensome and unauthorized observances ; and the Mahometan religion, derived from the corrupted Jewish and Christian, has imposed a similar kind of yoke on its numerous followers in those extensive regions of the world where it prevails.

Ver. 6. *A voice in the midst of the four beasts, or living creatures.*] This voice is from the throne, which was in the midst of the living creatures or cherubims. A voice of the highest authority, and most dread command, which was now required to stop the progress of this alarming evil.

*A measure of wheat for a penny : and three measures of barley for a penny : and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*] Wheat, barley, oil, and wine, were with the Eastern nations of antiquity the main support of life. These terms therefore were used by them to express plenty. He that had these in abundance was above want. Now it is proclaimed from the

heavenly throne, that during the progress of the black horse, however mournful and destructive, the necessities of life should be attainable, though at an excessive price; and that the more costly commodities, wine and oil, should not be injured.

In order to understand the relative price mentioned in the prophecy, it should be known, that a chœnix of wheat (a measure generally used among the ancients) was barely sufficient for the daily subsistence of a poor man's family. Its price, a denarius or penny, was the usual amount of a labourer's daily wages, (Matt. xx. 2.) But many articles are necessary in a poor man's house besides bread; and very dear and oppressive must those times be accounted, when the whole income will scarcely supply bread. In the days of Cicero, a denarius, the scriptural penny, would procure sixteen chœnices of wheat; and in those of Trajan, twenty. Thus the times of the yoke, or black horse, are indicated in this prophecy as a season of great scarcity.

A coarser bread might, it seems, be then had in greater plenty for a denarius, even as three to one; a bread of barley, which appears to have been used by the poorer Jews, (Judges vii. 13; John vi. 9; 2 Kings vii; Joseph. Antiq. v. c. vi. 4,) and which is still produced in the East, (Niehburgh's Travels.) Hence we may collect that the provision for the support of life under this seal, was to be slender in quantity, or coarse in quality; and that the dainties of wine and oil, were to be exposed to the danger of total failure.

But by these provisions, thus scarce and difficult of acquirement, are we to understand wheat, barley, wine, and oil, in their plain and literal meaning? Assuredly not. The tenor of prophetic language forbids,—directing our attention, as our Lord has directed it, (see ch. ii. 7.) to scarcity of another kind, even that of which the prophet Amos speaks:

“Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing of the words of the Lord.” (Amos viii. 11.) This kind of scarcity is frequently lamented by the prophetic writers, who delight in describing the spiritual plenty of Christ’s kingdom, by such sensible images, “corn, wine, and oil.” By these are signified that food of religious knowledge, by which the souls of men are sustained unto everlasting life: such we are invited by the evangelical prophet to buy, even “without price.” (Is. lv. 1.) Such are recommended to the purchase of the Laodiceans, by their divine Lord. (Rev. iii. 18.); such were dispensed throughout the world at the first preaching of the gospel, and upon terms of easy acquisition; “freely have ye received, freely give.” But when dark clouds of ignorance, denoted by the colour of the black horse, spread over the face of the Christian world, and corrupt teachers could advance their worldly purposes by bringing their disciples under the yoke of superstition, the knowledge and practice of genuine religion became scarce. Astonishing are the instances produced by historians of the ignorance of Christians in the middle ages, and of the gross immorality resulting from it.

Yet, during the long continuance of these dark times, the prophetic command from the throne has been *wonderfully fulfilled*; there has always been a moderate supply of spiritual food; the great saving doctrine of Christianity, *an eternal life of happiness, given to sinful man upon his faith and repentance, through the satisfaction of his Redeemer*, has been taught in all these ages; and that invaluable repository of divine knowledge, of spiritual wine and oil, *the Holy Bible, the word of God*, has been accessible to some persons in all times, since this injunction was delivered. Through all the ignorant, fanatical actions and corrupt hands, by which this sacred treasure has been transmitted to us, it has passed in

the main *uninjured*. The corruptions of it, even for the base purposes of party zeal and worldly ambition, have been *miraculously few*; and such as it has come down to our times, it will be delivered to posterity by the useful art of printing.

Thus hath the prophetic injunction from the throne preserved the spiritual food of man, through a dark period of long continuance, and of great difficulty and danger—*the oil and the wine have not been injured*.

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The exposition of this seal by Joseph Mede, and his numerous followers in this country, may be given in the words of Bishop Newton; who, having observed that “this period is characterised by a strict execution of justice, and by the procuration of corn, and oil, and wine,” and, that “the regulations about the necessaries of life, imply some want and scarcity of them; scarcity obliging men to exactness in the measure of things,” thus proceeds: “In short, the intent of the prophecy is, that corn should be provided for the people, but it should be distributed in exact measure and proportion. This third period commenceth with Septimius Severus, who was an emperor from the South, being a native of Africa. He was an enactor of just and equal laws, and was very severe and implacable to offences; he would not suffer even petty larcenies to go unpunished, as neither would Alexander Severus in the same period.” The Bishop then proceeds to recount what these two emperors did, in procuring corn, and oil, and other provisions for the Roman people, and then concludes as follows:” The colour of the black horse befits the severity of their nature and their name, and the *balances* are the well-known emblem of Justice, as well as an intimation of

scarcity ; and the proclamation for justice and judgment, and for the procuration of corn, oil, and wine, is fitly made by a creature like a man. This period continued during the reigns of the Septimian family—about forty-two years.”

This exposition Vitrunga has confuted in his preface to the seals ; and, in treating on this particular seal, he adds as follows : “ *Etsi id recte monuit Medus, emblema hoc esse Judicii publici, de annonâ statuentis. Sed quam ille frigide de cura annonæ temporariæ, quam hi imperatores susceperunt, simul instituit exponere ! Sane si majora et graviora his sigillis non contineantur, quam inter aliâ imperatores quosdam Romanos annonam temporariam rite curaturos esse ; eritne quod tanti hanc Revelationem faciat Ecclesia ?*” He then proceeds to explain the scarcity to be not of temporal goods, but of spiritual blessings ; and refers the period of this scarcity to the times, beginning with Constantine, and continued to the ninth century : and he instances in the feuds and divisions of the Church, when during the turbulent factions and bloody wars, occasioned by the heresies of the Donatists, Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, &c. the doctrine of evangelical truth became scarce. There is no great difference in this interpretation from that given above ; and the learned reader will perhaps determine, that the feuds and wars are intended to be prefigured under the fire-coloured horse of the second seal ; and that the emblems of this third seal, and the black horse, more exactly depicture the ignorance and darkness as to true religion, of the middle ages succeeding.

From the ancient commentators we have no assistance of any value in the exposition of this seal ; they apply it to the *lapsed* under persecution, in their own times, without any warrant to do so.



## PART II.

## SECTION VI.

*The opening of the fourth Seal.*

CHAP. vi. ver. 7, 8.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Ver. 8. *A pale horse.*] *Χλωρος*, in the received translation rendered by the adjective *pale*, is used in the Greek Scriptures, to express the colour of grassy-green;<sup>1</sup> which though beautiful in the clothing of the trees and fields, is very unseemly, disgusting, and even horrible when it appears upon flesh; for it is there the livid colour of corruption. In my translation, I have therefore expressed *ἰππος χλωρος*, with the additional epithet of *livid green*: the paleness is of that character. By Homer, the epithet *χλωρος* is applied to *fear*, (Odyss. M. 243.) as expressive of that green paleness which overspreads the human face on the seizure of that passion: and the epithet *pale*, may be adequate to express this colour, as affecting the human face, but seems unequal to convey the force of *χλωρος* when applied to this *ghastly* horse.

<sup>1</sup> See Rev. ix. 4, and Gen. ii. 5, in the Greek of the Septuagint.

There is a sublime climax, or scale of terrific imagery, exhibited in the colours of the horses in the four first seals, denoting, as I understand them, the progressive character of the Christian times, from its pure beginning, to its greatest corruption. It begins with *pure white*; then changes to *fiery and vengeful*; then to *black, or mournful*; and when we suppose that nothing more dreadful in colour can appear, then comes another gradation still more terrific, even this *deadly pale*: and the imagery is scriptural as well as sublime, and a striking resemblance to it may be observed in the following poetical passage: "Her Nazarites were *purser than snow*, they were *whiter than milk*, their polishing was of *sapphire*. Their visage is *blacker than a coal*, (Heb. darker than blackness.) *They are not known in the streets*; *their skin cleaveth to their bones, it is withered*. Such a gradation was there also, from heavenly-pure, to foul and horrible, in the Christian church.

*Death.*] This grisly king of terrors, so mounted, is very different from the benign Conqueror, who came forth on the opening of the first seal, seated on the white horse. Yet his person is not described; his name only is given, and the picture is left to be supplied by the imagination of the reader, where, (such is the natural horror of dissolution,) he stands delineated in terrible appearance. Death is personified frequently in Scripture, as an invader, a conqueror, an enemy, a king. Such he now appears, in formidable power.

*Hell.*] Death, in his victorious career, is followed by *Hell*; for a description of which, in conjunction with Death, see note, ch. i. 18. When Death and Hell are spoken of as acting together, the utmost destruction and desolation are implied. (See Prov. v. 5; Song Sol. viii. 6; Is. v. 13, 14.) Consequently, the period of the fourth seal is a period

of great slaughter and devastation. But in the metaphorical language of Scripture, these are not confined to act upon the lives of men only, but extend their destructive influence over whatever may tend to make life happy; and it is the most dire work of Death and Hell, to destroy in the heart of man those seeds of religion which are there planted to grow up unto *eternal life*. It is in this sense that Sardis is said to be *dead*. (Ch. iii. 1.) Persons, in whom the *spiritual life* in Christ is extinct, are said to be in the *shadow of death*; and they who promote this extinction in themselves and others, are called “children of *Hell* :” and the recovery of such persons to true religion, is described as a resurrection from the *dead*. (Matt. iv. 16; Luke i. 79; Ezek. xxxvii.) Conformably to these images, Death and Hell, under this seal, are described as making ravage not only on the natural lives, but on the spiritual lives of men, by eradicating the vital principle of pure religion.

The Christian religion, which had begun its benign progress in white array, and under the guidance of apostolic teachers, is now not only so changed in colour and appearance, as to be scarcely discernible as the same; but is under the direction of *deadly* and *infernal* agents, who delight to destroy in her all that remains of primitive purity.

*Over the fourth part of the earth.*] This is the only passage in the prophecy in which a *fourth part* of the earth is mentioned; the third part of this, and of other objects, frequently occurs. It may perhaps be found, that the Christian countries which underwent the rage of this seal, bore this proportion to the remainder. The dark ignorance, corruption, and oppression of Christian liberty, under the third seal, extended generally throughout the Christian world; but the slaughter and devastation (which

remain to be described in the following note) reached only to certain parts.

*To kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*] These will be found the same with “the four sore judgments of God,” denounced against a sinful land by the prophet Ezekiel, (ch. xiv. 21.) Let the learned reader compare this passage with the Greek of the Septuagint, and he will acknowledge the resemblance, if not the identity. He will perhaps think also that the expression *εν λιμῳ* would be better rendered *with famine*; and he will be aware that the word *Θανατος* should be translated *pestilence*, in which sense it is used by the prophet, as it is also in more than thirty places beside, by the Septuagint translators, to express the word *דבר*, *pestis*, (see Trommii Concord.) Pestilence, being in an extraordinary degree *deadly*, obtained the general name of *death*.

These then being the four sore judgments of God, are to be understood as such, (and also because the number four implies universality or completion,) to contain all kinds of devastation and destruction; and these are let loose under this seal upon a fourth of the Christian world. Under the second and third seal they had begun to appear, but in the fourth their united force is exerted to ravage all before them; for, to speak without metaphor, when (under the second seal) uncharitable controversies and ambitious animosities had banished that peace which true religion cannot fail to promote; and dark ignorance and superstition, and domineering priestcraft (under the third seal) had fixed a burdensome yoke on the necks of the disciples, and made pure Christian knowledge of difficult attainment, then greater evils naturally ensued. Ignorance became blind submission, and priestcraft advanced into civil tyranny. Thus, under the fourth seal, “*the mystery*

*of iniquity*” was completed. It was then that the harsh usurpation, which we call the Papal tyranny, was extended over the *lives and the consciences of Christians*. To profess religion in its purity, became a crime. Bloody tribunals were erected, and severe and deathly laws enacted against those who deviated from the standard of doctrine established by the corrupt rulers. Armies were raised to enforce obedience to their orders; and entire nations of Christians, under the imputed name of heretics, were subjugated, or extirpated by the sword. Thus, under the assumed authority of the Christian Church, under the auspices and direction of her professed ministers and rulers, *Death and Hell* were seen to devastate a great part of the Christian world, destroying the lives of men, both literally and spiritually, and eradicating the pure doctrines of the Gospel.

<sup>1</sup> The chronological periods of these four seals re-

<sup>1</sup> The interpretation of the prophecy under this seal, most generally adopted in this country, is thus given in an abstracted form taken from Mede, Bishop Newton, &c., by the learned editors of the National Bible. (Rev. ch. vi. 6, 8.) “The fourth seal or period is distinguished by a concurrence of evils, war, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts. These are the same four sore judgments with which Ezekiel threatened Jerusalem, (Ezek. xiv. 21.) These four were to destroy ‘the fourth part of the earth.’ The image of Death riding on a pale horse, and hell or the grave following with him, ready to swallow up the dead bodies, is highly poetical. This period commences with the emperor Maximin, and continues to the time of Dioclesian, about fifty years. The history of Maximin and his several successors is full of wars and murders, invasions of foreign armies, rebellions of subjects, and deaths of princes. Here was sufficient employment for ‘the sword.’ And such wars and devastations must necessarily produce a famine, and ‘the famine’ is another distinguishing calamity of this period. An usual consequence of famine is ‘the pestilence,’ which is the third distinguishing calamity of this period. This pestilence, as it is recorded by an historian of the time, arising from Æthiopia, while Gallus and Volusian were emperors, pervaded all the Roman provinces,



spectively may be generally, but cannot be exactly ascertained; because, as was observed before, the

and for fifteen years incredibly exhausted them. Another historian says, speaking of the devastations of the Scythians, in the reign of Gallus above mentioned, that the pestilence, not less pernicious than the war, destroyed whatever was left of human kind, and made such havoc as had never been done in former times. When countries are depopulated by these causes, 'the wild beasts' multiply, and come into towns to destroy men, which is the fourth distinguishing calamity of this period. This would appear a probable consequence of the former calamities, if history had recorded nothing of it; but it happens that one special instance is recorded of five hundred wolves entering a city which was deserted by its inhabitants. The colour of the pale horse is very suitable to the mortality of this period."

This interpretation is not at variance with that of Andreas Cæsariensis and some of the ancient commentators, who have understood by this seal the plagues of war, famine, and pestilence, sent by divine vengeance on the persecutors of the Christians, in the times of Maximin, &c., for the history of which sufferings and devastation Eusebius is quoted. But when we look to the ancient commentators as of high authority, it is to Irenæus, Methodius, Hippolitus, &c., that we must principally refer, as living near to the times of St. John. Now none of these are quoted, or could probably have given this interpretation, as they did not live to interpret by the event.

Vitringa understands this seal, as he does the three preceding, to foretell *the history of the Christian Church*. And this seal in particular he supposes to be fulfilled in the dreadful ravages permitted by divine Providence to afflict, and in part annihilate, this Church, miserably divided and corrupted in the sixth, and subsequent centuries,—by the Mahometan Saracens and Turks.

These disastrous events may perhaps be comprehended in the history belonging to this seal, or at least they followed as the necessary effects of the ignorance and superstition under the third seal. But the *four sore judgments* are of greater extent and comprehension, and the papal tyranny, which began at the same time with the Mahometan, is not to be excluded from the account.

Upon the whole, the predictions contained under the four first seals, are expressed so shortly and so generally, that it may seem improper to apply them to any special and particular events. The colour and character of the times, succeeding each other in the Christian Church, are all that we can fairly collect from them; and the main question to be determined concerning them seems to be this:—whether they are intended to foreshow the character of the

change was gradual; and in such cases, though we can see clearly, as in the colours of the rainbow, that the change from the one to the other has taken place, yet it is not so easy to ascertain the point of contact. Thus, generally speaking, we may affirm, that the uncharitable and vengeful character of the second seal is to be seen distinctly in the fourth century, though it had its dawns much sooner.

times in the Roman empire, as Mede and his followers contend; or, as Vitranga, and Durham, and the writer of these annotations have supposed, those in the Christian Church.

In my introduction to a former work I have stated my reasons for believing that (agreeably to the opinion of many eminent divines) all sacred prophecy has for its object *the fates and fortunes of the Church of God and of Christ*; that it seldom deviates from this object; and that when the fates of nations or of individuals are foretold, it is even then with some reference to the future state of the Church and its Messiah. If this notion be just of divine prophecy in general, it must extend also to the apocalyptic prophecies. Nor shall we be warranted to apply them to the history of particular nations, unless the symbols, as in some cases, evidently and particularly demand such application. In the thirteenth and in the seventeenth chapters of this prophetic book, certain symbols will be seen to occur, which, compared with similar expressions of the prophet Daniel, point out and demand our application of them to *Rome*. But in the figurative language of the four seals, there is no such reference: neither the horses, nor their riders, have any thing to designate them as Roman. The first horse, by the confession of Mede himself, the great leader of this Roman interpretation, is not Roman. How can we expect those which follow him to be such? Or, why, when we have so great and interesting an object in view, as the fates and fortunes of the Church of Christ, (an object plainly placed before us by the first visions of the book,) why are we to suppose that its prophecies are to be fulfilled in the heathen history of the rebellious wars, famines, pestilences, and devastations which occurred in that vast, unwieldy body of the Roman empire, as they have done, and will do, in other ill-regulated states? Why are we to be content with a literal contemplation of so mean and unworthy a character, when, enlarging our attention to the figurative meaning, as we are exhorted to do in the opening of the prophecy, (ch. ii. 11, &c.) we see the general description of Christ's Church pass before our eyes, in emblems exactly concordant with its general history?

The third seal, under which superstition imposed a yoke of ceremonies and observances such as pure religion had rejected, seems to have had its beginnings in the times when the Church, associating itself with the heathen philosophy, imbibed with it heathen superstition. These abuses crept in by degrees, and the black colour seems not to have thoroughly prevailed till the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries, (Mosheim, cent. v. pp. 376, 382, 390—396.) The corruption and ravages of the fourth seal came on likewise by gradation, and did not arrive at their utmost horror till the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the latter of these it was enacted by the fourth council lateran, that heretics should be delivered to the civil power *to be burned*. At which time, and during a lamentable period of forty years, more than a million of human beings are said to have suffered by capital punishment, (from two to three hundred thousand in the south of France alone,) for what was falsely pronounced to be heresy.

*Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!*

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## PART II.

### SECTION II.

#### *The opening of the Fifth Seal.*

#### CHAP. VI. ver. 9—11.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held :

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, oly and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them ; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethen, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Ver. 9. *Under the altar.*] We are not informed whether the altar here mentioned is the golden one of incense, which makes part of the scenery in ch. viii, and has its proper place before the throne ; or the brazen altar of burnt sacrifice. The former of these belongs more appropriately to the scenery ; but the latter is more fitting to the action represented, namely, the martyrs slain ; or, as the word *εσφαγμενων*, applied to the altar, signifies more particularly, *sacrificed*. This uncertainty occasions some difficulty, which may perhaps be removed, by supposing the action of this seal, as of the four preceding, to be represented graphically, or in picture. In this case, though the altar of incense may be still supposed to stand in its proper place, before the mercy-seat and the throne, yet at the same time the brazen altar may also appear delineated in picture upon the roll of the book when the fifth seal is opened by the Lamb ; for on the unfolding of the fifth roll, this additional altar comes into sight, and the martyrs are seen at the foot of it, and voices are heard to accompany their expressive gestures, as they hold up their hands in prayer. In the figurative language of Scripture, the blood of the murdered is said to cry from the ground to the Lord for vengeance, (Gen. iv. 10.)

Ver. 10. *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood.*] Such with pious sufferers has been the frequent subject of complaint : “ How long shall the ungodly triumph ? ” (Ps. xciv. 3.) For wise reasons, discoverable in part now, but to be completely known hereafter, the Almighty suspends his vengeance on the triumphant

wicked. And in chapter xv. of this prophecy, we shall see this complaint answered, by the triumph of the martyrs, and the “just judgments of God manifested.”

The epithets here applied to God are exactly indicative of the divine nature as it affects this case. He is *Δεσποτης*, sovereign arbiter of all. He is holy, —far apart from the wicked,—he is “the truth itself” in the performance of his promises, to raise the righteous from suffering to happiness, and to punish their unrepentant persecutors.

Ver. 11. *And white robes were given unto every one of them.*] These are given to them as indicative of their innocence and purity, and of their title to follow their Redeemer into his heavenly kingdom. (See note, ch. iii. 4.)

*That they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants and brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*] At the time when this prophecy was delivered, there had been but few martyrs to the Christian cause. We are here taught to expect, what subsequent history has shown, a numerous succession of suffering *witnesses* through a long period. We were prepared by the imagery of the second and third, and more especially of the fourth seal, to expect some notice of those who in such times should “be slain for the testimony of the Word.” In this seal it comes forward, but, as in the other seals, in general description only; and the subject is resumed in the sequel of the prophecy. (Ch. xi. 7—14. xiii. 7. xv. 2—6. xviii. 20. xx. 4.) The period of the martyrs therefore seems to extend from the death of our Lord, the first Christian martyr, (see ch. i. 5,) to “the great day of recompense,” when “the noble army of martyrs” will be ultimately completed and avenged. But the part of



this period which seems more particularly to belong to this fifth seal, is the close of the fourth seal, when so immense an accumulation of martyrdom had arisen, that the question “How long?” seems emphatically to be called forth. And thus the events of the fifth seal will stand in their proper place.

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The fifth seal is generally understood, by ancient and modern interpreters, to describe the sufferings and hopes of the Christian martyrs. But different writers have applied the prophecy contained in it to different periods of their history; and many of them to the time of the Dioclesian persecution, as most bloody, and of very long continuance. This is adopted by Mede and his followers, and accords with their application of the foregoing seals to the Roman empire.

Vitringa applies it to the yet more cruel and lasting persecution of the Waldenses, Albigenses, Bohemian brethren, and many other confessors of a purer religion throughout Europe, in later times, by the agents of the Papal Church. But there seems to be no reason why it should be restricted to any particular body of martyrs of any particular period. All are to be avenged; and it may be perhaps more fitly understood to comprehend all the martyrs to the Christian cause, from the apostolical age to the happy time when such sufferings shall finally cease. However, there can be little doubt, but that it extends to the period of the sixth vial, when the retribution here promised is fulfilled upon the enemies of the Lamb, the antichristian persecutors, the beast and his followers. (Ch. xv. xvi.)

## PART II.

## SECTIONS VIII and IX.

*The opening of the Sixth Seal.*

CHAP. vi. ver. 12, to the end.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

The subject matter of the sixth seal may be commodiously divided into two parts. The first of these (from chapter vi. 12, to the end) contains the threatening signs of a dreadful judgment upon the world, but more directly and especially on the enemies of Christ, who are seen to deprecate his wrath, and attempt to hide themselves from his avenging presence. The second part is included in the seventh chapter, and contains the preservation of

God's elect servants, "from the wrath to come," and, also the consequent triumphant rejoicing and thanksgiving of men and angels.

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THE FIRST PART OF THE SIXTH SEAL.

Ver. 12, 13, 14. *Lo, there was a great earthquake, &c.*] These alarming images are not now seen for the first time in the prophetic word of God; they have appeared before. The Holy Spirit had denounced, in terms very similar to these, by the mouths of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel, the divine judgments which were about to fall upon corrupt Judæa and the wicked nations surrounding. The expressions of Isaiah concerning Babylon, (ch. xiii. 10,) and other nations, in particular Idumea, in ch. xxxiv, exhibit a very striking resemblance to those of the Apocalypse. "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh,—the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.—I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place in the wrath of the Lord of hosts.—*Babylon*, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." Thus far in the thirteenth chapter concerning Babylon. In the thirty-fourth chapter the indignation of the Lord is pronounced against *all nations* and their armies: "He hath delivered them to the slaughter; the mountains shall be melted with their blood; and all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their hosts shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree; for my sword shall be

bathed in heaven; behold, it shall come down on Idumea, and upon the people of my curse to judgment." These prophetic denunciations were fulfilled, typically at least, in the complete destruction of the nations against which they were uttered.

Our Lord himself delivered a prophecy remarkable, amongst other things, for the same figures of speech: "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." (Matt. xxiv. 29, &c.) But to these figurative expressions, used by preceding prophets, he added others which are of a new character, and peculiar to his own predictions. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory: and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The ablest commentators have understood this to be evidently spoken of "the great day of the Lord," the last day, the day of judgment. But it has at the same time been supposed, that the primary object of the prophecy is the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish economy; for in this event we find a type, a lively image, and a certain pledge and forerunner of the more signal and extended vengeance which will overtake the enemies of God, in the latest period of the world.

The prophecy of the Apocalypse now under consideration, thus recalls to our attention this prophecy, and the others above quoted. They have all of them been typically fulfilled in the fall of those nations, whose after ruin they prefigured: but a more perfect completion is reserved for them, with

which their grandeur of design and sublimity of expression more exactly accord; for they seem to unite with the apocalyptic prophecy, in pointing ultimately and emphatically to “*the great day of the Lord’s wrath.*”

Ver. 15, 16, 17. *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman and every free-man hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?*] The persons who flee in such dreadful disorder from the face of God and his vicegerent, are the enemies of the heavenly throne, and of his pure religion. They are of all ranks and descriptions; and there is no attempt to oppose his almighty arm, no resistance. They flee before him in the utmost dismay and terror. But the description of the slaughter and execution are withheld for the present; before these are exhibited, the faithful servants of God, and of his anointed, must be saved “from the wrath to come.”

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#### THE SECOND PART OF THE SIXTH SEAL.

*The sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, and the presentation of the palm-bearing multitude before the throne.*

#### CHAP. vii.

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.



2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God : and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed : and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

7 Of the tribe of Sineon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.

12 Saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes ? and whence came they ?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Ver. 1. *And after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, &c.*] The execution of the divine judgment, so fearfully expected by the inhabitants of the earth, is now committed to four angels, the ministers of divine vengeance, each of whom takes his appointed station, withholding the fury of the tempest, till he receives an additional command. Our Saviour, in the prophecy already quoted, as apparently connected with this scene, mentions “*the four winds of heaven*,” as the four cardinal divisions of the whole world, from which his angels are to “gather together his elect,” when the judgment which he then foretells shall take place. In the figurative language of Scripture, the action of the four winds together implies a dreadful and a general destruction. (Jer. xlix. 36; Dan. vii. 2.)

Ver. 2, 3. *And I saw another angel ascending from the East, having the seal of the living God, &c.*] The East being the quarter of the heavens from which the luminaries arise, was by the ancients esteemed the chief cardinal point. In the camp of Israel, the East was the front and post of honour: here Moses and Aaron were stationed. The four angels having taken possession of the four quarters, the fifth angel, coming with additional commands to them, now appears in the brightest and most honourable station, and thence he proclaims his orders. By these, the destructive violence decreed, is suspended and restrained, till the servants of God are marked with “the seal of the living God,”—the seal of him who alone has life in himself, and through whom only others can live.

Seals, among the nations of antiquity, were used to designate property, to mark for each person his own possessions. The seal of God is the divine

mark by which “ he knoweth them that are his.” (2 Tim. ii. 19.) Such, under the divine covenant with Abraham and his descendants, was circumcision ; and baptism, under the Christian covenant, succeeding in the place of circumcision, was accounted by the fathers of the Christian Church to be this seal. But to speak more accurately, and conformably to the expressions of Scripture ; the *Holy Spirit*, given in baptism, is this seal of God, by which the faithful Christian is marked and preserved as the property of his Lord. (See 2 Cor. i. 22 ; Eph. i. 13 ; iv. 30.) In these passages it is represented as the earnest and pledge of preservation to life eternal. In the passage before us, this mark is represented figuratively as impressed upon the forehead, which agrees with the imagery of Ezekiel, (ch. ix.) foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when, before the angelic ministers of vengeance perform the parts appointed to them, another angel is commanded to mark the servants of God on the forehead : and so marked they are to be saved from the general calamity, as were Jeremiah, Daniel, and the three children, and many others whose names have not come down to us.

Ver. 4. *An hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*] There are several passages in the New Testament, as well as in the Old, which lead us to expect the restoration of the Jews, and their adoption into the Christian Church. (Rom. i. 16 ; ii. 9, 10 ; Matt. xv. 24 ; Rom. xi. 15—36.) And this extraordinary people, after their conversion to Christianity, may yet be kept apart, and precede other Christians in the paths and rewards of salvation ; or, we may suppose the body here so distinguished, to contain pious Christians of all denominations, a body which, upon the rejection of the Jews,

succeeded to their titles and honours, being called “the Israel of God.” (Gal. vi. 16; Col. ii. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 6—11.) But whether the number of the sealed be the original Israelites, or of their representatives in the Christian Church, it is a full, complete number, being, as the commentators observe, the complete square root of the number of the tribes, or perhaps of the twelve apostles, on whom, as a foundation, the Christian Church is said to be erected. (1 Kings xviii. 31; Luke xxii. 30; Eph. ii. 20.)

To the reader, who compares the names of the tribes and their order, as exhibited in parallel places of holy writ, some peculiarities will appear in this passage. The tribe of Dan is omitted, and that of Levi, which being dispersed among the other tribes, for the purpose of ministration, had not the allotment of a tribe in Canaan, is taken into its place. For the admission of Levi, a reason may be assigned. This tribe had been excluded, because, being divinely separated for the offices of the priesthood, a separate provision among all the tribes had been assigned to it: but now, being to enter on the heavenly Canaan, where there is no temple, and all are priests to God, (ch. xxi. 22; ver. 10.) the service of this tribe as priests is no longer needed; and therefore it resumes its ancient station among the brethren. For the omission of Dan, the reason commonly assigned is, that this tribe, by an early apostasy, became a common receptacle of idolatry, and thus was the means of corruption to the other tribes. (Jud. xvii.) The same cause is said to operate for the omission of the name of Ephraim, the name of Joseph, the Father, being here used instead. (Mede, p. 455.)

Ver. 9, 10. *And after this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, &c.]* The one hundred and forty-four



thousand of the sealed, the first fruits to Christ, having led the way, the Gentiles of later conversion follow, and are incorporated with them, (see Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11.) and presented before the throne in white robes, pure from sin, bearing palms, the signals of joy (Lev. xxiii. 40.); and they ascribe their salvation to God and the Redeemer. And here we may observe, that Ἡ Σωτηρία should be translated “*THE salvation.*” The Greek article requires it; and thus it expresses that peculiar deliverance and state of safety, which this palm-bearing multitude of gentile converts, together with the chosen Israelites, now experienced from “*THE great tribulation;*” and for which the merciful kindness of God and the Redeemer are celebrated so triumphantly.

Ver. 11. *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.*] The palm-bearing multitude are described in the ninth verse, as standing “before the throne, and before the Lamb;” that is, in the front of the throne, in the place of presentation: but the angels are “round about the throne;” they surround *the whole*, being exterior to the elders, as well as to the living creatures, and exterior also to the Christian multitude now presented, whose song of praise they conclude with the emphatical Amen; adding thereto, in a choral strain, their ascription of all honour, greatness, and power to God, for ever and ever! The station of the angels seems to be the same, and their song of similar import as in chapter five, when the seals are about to be opened. In both these situations, the occasion of their praise and thanksgiving is the blissful dispensation of human redemption, in which we are divinely informed that the angels in heaven take a joyful interest. (Luke xv. 10.)



Ver. 13. *What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*] This is a question which pious curiosity will not fail to ask,—and in this passage it is asked, only that it may receive its proper answer, and by an heavenly interpreter: “These are they which came out of great tribulation.” After which answer we may find it necessary to ask again, *what* great tribulation? but this question may be judged needless, perhaps, if we refer to the original Greek of the answer given by the elder, which is thus expressed, Οὗτοι εἰσιν οἱ ἐρχομενοι εκ της θλιψεως της μεγαλης, “These are they who are come out of *the* great tribulation.” In our received translation, the article (της *the*) is entirely omitted. But thus restored, as certainly it ought to be, will recall to our minds that “*great tribulation*” from which the “*servants of God*” had been now saved, by being placed under the divine seal and protection. (Ver. 3 and 4.)

This may probably be found to be the same θλιψις μεγαλη of which our Saviour speaks in his memorable prophecy concerning the fate of Jerusalem, but which is supposed by judicious interpreters to extend also to the times preceding the end of this world, (Matt. xxiv. 21, 29; Mark xiii. 19, 24.) from which great tribulation he promises deliverance to his elect, that is, his sealed servants, and their being gathered to him, as is represented in this apocalyptic vision. They come out of it, and leave the enemies of Christ to their terrible fate.

And if we should be inclined to doubt, whether this palm-bearing multitude are of the sealed, let us attend to the remaining part of the elder’s answer. “These are they which are come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:” that is, “they have put on the righteousness of God by faith,” (Rom. iii. 22; iv. 11; ix. 30.) have so be-

lieved and lived, as to be justified and saved by Christ's offering and death. Such certainly are the true "servants of God;" and under this name they are here appointed to be sealed, and as such to stand in the presence of their God and Redeemer.

Thus we may conclude, that the whole body taken together, first of the sealed Israelites, and then of the innumerable elect gentile converts, represent the chosen and redeemed in the Christian Church, of all ages and nations.

Ver. 15, 16, 17.] *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, &c.*] These elect servants of God are to be perpetually blest with the divine presence, and eternally freed from the sufferings which disquiet mortal life, partaking those pure and exquisite joys which the Redeemer (whose shepherd's rod and kingly sceptre are the same—see note, ch. ii. 27.) alone can bestow. The metaphor conveys this plain meaning; nor can it be supposed to allude to any other happy state than that which is heavenly.

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THE followers of Mede continue to apply the prophecies of the seals, by a regular chronology to the history of the Roman empire; considering at the same time, this sixth seal to be more particularly connected with the Christian Church. The fifth seal they had supposed to foreshow the sufferings of the Christians under the Dioclesian persecution; and *the sixth seal they understand* to exhibit that happy revolution, in which Constantine having destroyed the Pagan leaders, and ascended the imperial throne, suppressed the ascendancy of the persecuting heathens, and placed power in the hands of the Chris-

tians. "This," says Bishop Newton, "is a triumph of Christ over his heathen enemies, and a triumph after a severe persecution; so that the time, and all the circumstances, as well as the series and order of the prophecy, agree perfectly with this interpretation."—"The sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads," he afterwards continues, "can imply no less than that many converts should be baptized, and those who before, in times of persecution, had been compelled to worship God in private, should now make a free, open, and public profession of their religion; and that such an accession was made to the Church, every one knoweth, who knoweth any thing of the history of this time." And speaking of the palm-bearing multitude, he adds, "They are arrayed in white robes as emblems of their sanctity and justification through the merits and death of Christ. They are, like the children of Israel, arrived at their Canaan or land of rest; and they shall no more suffer hunger, thirst, or heat, as they did in the wilderness. They are now happily freed from their former troubles and molestations; and their heathen adversaries shall no more prevail against them."

This exposition of the sixth seal, derived originally from Mede, and adopted with little variation by Lowman, Daubuz, Pyle, and many others, is rejected by Vitringa, who, with his usual learning and ability, contends, that the prophecy cannot have been so fulfilled; and he looks to the completion of it in future time, but yet in the course of this world, when the reformed Churches shall completely triumph in the destruction of their papal foe, and in the conversion of the world to pure religion.

To Vitringa it will be conceded, that this prophecy, being of future fulfilment, may have its completion before this world comes to its end. But in what manner, and in respect to what objects (excepting

*generally* in the punishment of Christ's enemies, and the beatification of his true servants,) it will be prudent to leave undetermined. Certainly we must agree with Vitringa in esteeming the accomplishment of this prophecy to be yet to come; for no one possessed of knowledge in ecclesiastical history, can point out a period in past time, when this prophetic vision of such supreme beatitude has received its accomplishment. No time can be assigned, when the destruction of Christ's enemies, and the exaltation of his servants in perfect purity and felicity, bear any satisfactory resemblance to the gratifying picture displayed in this prophecy.

It may seem wonderful, that a scholar of Joseph Mede's accomplishment could suppose that the palm-bearing multitude, presented before the throne under emblems of such purity and virtue, and rewarded with such transcendent honours and felicity, could possibly be the multitude of Christians in the times of Constantine and his successors; because nothing is more clear, or more generally shown in ecclesiastical history, than that the tenets and practice of the Christian Church had begun to be very corrupt and degenerate at this time; and that from this very period its increasing debasement is to be traced.

None of the ancient commentators, who lived after these times, have ventured (as Vitringa observes) to apply this prophecy to *them*. And though Eusebius and Lactantius, (quoted and appealed to by Mede and his followers,) having witnessed the prosperous change in the Christians from a state of persecution to freedom and authority, naturally augured pure and happy days for them; yet Gregory of Nazianzum, and Jerome, who lived to see these expectations blasted, together with all succeeding historians, tell a far different tale. They represent, in very strong terms, the degeneracy of



the Christians, corrupted from this very date by worldly prosperity. In my former work, I have quoted several authorities in support of this position, to which the reader may refer. I will now produce two of these only; but they may be deemed unanswerable, as taken from the very authors whose opinions I would controvert.

Joseph Mede himself, in his “Apostasy of the latter Times,” treating of the deification of saints, and the worship of relics, which he deduces from the period immediately following the exaltation of the Church by Constantine, says: “Alas! now began the Ὑστέρου καιροῦ, or latter times; this was the fatal time, and thus the Christian apostasy was to be ushered. If they had known this, it would have turned their joyous shoutings and triumphs at these things into mourning.” (Mede’s Works, p. 680.)

Bishop Newton, in the same work upon the Prophecies, in which he understands the “beata tranquillitas” enjoyed by the Christians under Constantine and his successors, as fulfilling the prediction of the sixth seal, gives (with a view to elucidate another prophecy) this very different, but true and faithful account of the Constantinian æra.

“The tenth, and last general persecution, was begun by Dioclesian; it raged, though not at all times equally, ten years; and was suppressed entirely by Constantine, the first Roman emperor who made open profession of Christianity; and then the Church was no longer persecuted, but was protected and favoured by the civil power. But still this is called only *a little help*; because, though it added much to the temporal prosperity, yet it contributed little to the spiritual graces and virtues of Christians. It enlarged their revenues and increased their endowments, but proved the fatal means of corrupting the doctrine, and re-



laxing the discipline of the Church." And a little afterwards he adds: "No sooner were the Christians delivered from the fury of their heathén adversaries, than they began to quarrel among themselves, and to persecute one another." (Dissertation 17th, page 64, &c. 8vo. edit.)

We may now ask, whether to such a race of degenerate and nominal Christians, we can with any degree of propriety apply this prophetic description of the palm-bearing multitude "who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" who are represented as perpetually blest with the divine presence, eternally delivered from mortal sufferings, and, under the guidance and protection of their Lord and Redeemer, preserved tearless for ever?

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Having now gone through the six first seals, which appear to have a certain unity and integrity in themselves, it may be useful to review the most notable expositions which have been published concerning them.

Vitringa confines these to three in number.

First. That which, originating with Grotius, was adopted and improved by Hammond and Lightfoot, and which supposes these prophecies to have been fulfilled in the wars, slaughters, famines, and calamities, with which Divine vengeance visited the Jews, to their final destruction as a nation under the emperor Vespasian. The learned commentator admits, that there are plausible grounds for adopting this interpretation, at least in some parts of it. At the same time he states some objections to it, which he deems insuperable: especially that fact which he holds to be now irrevocably established, (on the evidence of Irenæus and Clemens Alexandrinus, and of internal proofs derived from the Apocalypse,)

that this prophetic book was written *after* the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore could not foretell that great event. A similar line of interpretation, he tells us, is pursued by the eloquent Bishop of Meaux, (Bossuet,) dealing in generals only, and applying the prophetic emblems in a vague, uncertain manner, unworthy of the dignity and purport of the Divine Word, and of its sacred figurative resemblances.

The second system of interpretation mentioned by Vitranga, is that of the learned, ingenious, and eloquent Joseph Mede and his followers. The merits of this having been more particularly canvassed in the preceding pages, need not be brought into view again. The objections of Vitranga to this scheme are well worthy of the learned reader's attention, and may be seen in the preface to his *Exposition on the Seals*, (p. 231.)

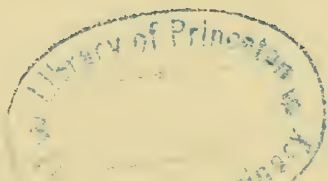
The third scheme of interpretation is that adopted in a great measure by Vitranga himself, and which seems to have been prevalent in his time among the commentators on the Continent, of the Protestant persuasion. This distinguishes the prophetic history of the seals from that of the trumpets, the latter not being allowed as a continuation of the former in a regular line of succession. The emblems under the seals are understood to exhibit a general history of the greater changes which were to take place in the world, more especially in the Christian Church, until the end; while those under the trumpets are supposed to foretell and recount the history of the same times, but much more particularly and minutely, and under different characters.

The same general view of the subject presented itself to me, when studying the Apocalypse by the help only of scriptural comparison, unprejudiced by acquaintance with the opinions of former comment-

ators. But in filling up the parts, and in explaining the prophetic language and emblems, in detail, of each particular seal, I differed, more or less, from all preceding expositors; and on a careful, and I trust, candid review of my proceedings, I find little to retract.

All the seals, I apprehend, foretell the history of the Christian Church. The first six contain a short, rapid, and general sketch of the progress of Christianity from its first establishment in the world, to that time, yet future, when the enemies of Christ shall be separated for punishment, and his faithful servants for heavenly favour and rewards. This period may probably synchronize with that of the latest prophecies in the Apocalypse, and with the final coming of Christ; but of the perfect completion of prophecies whose events are yet to come, it is both prudent and becoming to be silent.

Such appears to be this general outline of the Christian history. Many important intervals remain yet to be filled up under the seventh seal, which will be found to contain *all* the prophecies remaining, and, by retracing the history of the Christian Church, to supply many events which were reserved for a more *particular* notice and display. This method of divine prediction, presenting at first a general sketch and outline, and afterwards a more complete and finished picture of events, is not peculiar to this prophetic book. It is justly observed by Sir Isaac Newton, that “the prophecies of Daniel are all of them related to each other,” and that “every following prophecy adds something new to the former.” (Sir Isaac Newton on Daniel, part i. c. iii.) To this we may add, that the *same* empires in Daniel are represented by various types and symbols. The four parts of the image, and the four beasts, are varied symbols of the *same* empires. The



bear and the he-goat, in different visions, represent the same original; and so do the ram and the leopard. We are not therefore to be surprised, when we find the history of the Church beginning anew, and appearing under other, yet corresponding types; and thus filling up, with additional and important information, the outlines which had been traced before.

## PART III.

## SECTION I.

*The opening of the seventh Seal, and the commission to the Angels with the seven Trumpets.*

CHAP. viii. ver. 1—5.

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

THE opening of each of the preceding seals had been followed immediately by some significant action, accompanied by explanatory voices. Nothing of this sort now occurs. An awful silence suspends the gratification of curiosity. After this solemn pause, preparation is made for another exhibition. The seven angels stand forth, and receive seven trumpets.

This silence has been supposed to express, or allude to, that custom of holy worship among the Jews, in which they accompanied the offering of



incense in the temple with their silent prayers. But this silence precedes the offering of incense, and occurs even before the officiating angel is stationed at the altar. And there is also an intervening action; the angels are presented with their trumpets.

Bishop Newton understands the silence to express a pause or interval between the foregoing and succeeding visions, to prepare the mind for signal events; and may we not add, to prepare us for a change in the mode of exhibition and series of the events, which will be found to be no longer the same? The seventh seal has nothing appropriately its own, but introduces the seven trumpets, which will be seen to prefigure seven periods of ecclesiastical history, and it makes way for them by a preparatory scene, which seems intended to lead to a right conception of *their tendency*.

Some commentators, following the Jewish writers, have supposed and enumerated seven principal angels here employed, but there is no sufficient authority for this. (See Tobit xii. 15, with Jortin's remarks; Eccl. Hist. i. 113; Gray's Key to the Old Testament, art. *Tobit*; Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. i. 176.) On the number of angels now employed, we may remark, that their being changed from four to seven, seems to portend a new scene of visions, and not a continuation of those under the six seals.<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 3, 4. *And another angel came and stood at the*

<sup>1</sup> Some writers, and among them Vitringa, have supposed the silence in Heaven to express a *continuance* of that happy state of the Christian Church on earth, which they have understood to be represented at the close of the sixth seal and seventh chapter. But this silence is *in heaven*, which, throughout the scenery and visions of the trumpets, now succeeding, is kept wholly distinct from *the earth*, as will be seen in the sequel.

*altar, &c.*] Upon this golden altar, called also the altar of incense, standing before the seat of the divine glory in the temple under the law, no strange priest was allowed to officiate; but the legally appointed incense offered thereon by the legal priests, was accepted as an atonement for the people, who accompanied the offering with their prayers, (Num. xvi; Luke i. 9, 10, 21.) This angel therefore may seem to represent a lawful priest, and the incense added to the prayers a mode of worship whereby to approach God, (see note, ch. v. 8,) most probably the Christian, for it is given from heaven, to accompany the prayers of the *saints*, who are indubitably Christians, and “ascending before God,” must be supposed acceptable to him. (Compare Acts x. 4, *εὐωπιον του Θεου*.) On this account, the angel has, by some commentators, been supposed to represent the Lord Jesus, the great Christian high-priest. But in opposition to this notion it must be observed, that the angel does not appear with any of our Lord’s attributes. He is described simply as “another angel.” And as the lot to burn incense, under the law, was not appropriated to the high-priest, but committed without distinction to the priests of the twenty-four courses; so we may see reason to imagine that this angel may represent the Christian priesthood in general, as exercised in legal subordination to the Lord Jesus, the great high priest.

This religion is of heavenly origin; and the smoke of its incense, that is, its worship, ascends from the hands of its appointed priests, acceptable to God.

Ver. 5. *And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*] Much learned discussion has been

employed to determine the import of the word *λιβανωτος*, and also to show from which altar, and how, and when, the fire was obtained by the angel. But all that is needful to be known respecting this action, seems sufficiently apparent; namely, that the angel, having finished the offering of incense, “upon the golden altar before the throne,” takes the censer, vial, or patera, whichever it may be, in which the incense had been placed, and fills it *εκ του πυρος*, from, or with, the fire of the altar, and then casts the contents to the earth. The scene of this action is in Heaven, before the heavenly throne, as described in chapter the fourth. The earth from which St. John had been called up by an heavenly voice in the first verse of that chapter, was in sight below; (as will further appear in the following visions;) and the contents of the censer (whether with it or without it seems not material) are cast down to the earth. But what were these contents? *Answ.* Either the incense burning with the fire, if any of the “*much incense*” remained unconsumed; or the burning coals only. But the incense thus burning means (as before was observed) the Christian worship and religion, pure and heavenly in its origin and nature, but sent down to earth, and mixing with the passions and worldly projects of sinful men, produces signal commotions, expressed in prophetic language by “voices, thunderings, lightnings, earthquake.” Or if it be, as perhaps it may, that the fire alone is cast to the earth, (the incense being exhausted,) the interpretation will be nearly the same; for our Lord has declared, in the same kind of figurative language, that in sending forth his holy religion to the earth, he had cast fire thereon; *πυρ ηλθον βαλειν εις την γην*, Luke xii. 49. It is the very same expression; and this fire he afterwards explains to signify *divisions and contention*.

(See Grotius and Whitby in loc.) Thus, in the representation before us, the Christian religion begins in peace and pure incense, (Mal. i. 11,) rendered effectual by the Saviour's atonement, and, accompanying the devout prayers of the Church, is offered purely for a time; till mingling with human corruptions, it becomes the instrument of discord and violence. This is only a general and preluding view of the subject. The heresies, divisions, and commotions, which, under the name of Christianity, miserably afflicted the Christian world, and almost banished from it true religion, are to be more especially depicted in the sequel of this seal.

The significant action now exhibited, prepares us for the kind of history which is to follow; which we may reasonably expect to be that of *the Christian religion* thus producing commotions upon the earth.

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Some annotators have considered the fire thus cast to the earth to signify the vengeance of the Almighty on the Roman empire; and they have attempted to support this exposition by a passage in the tenth chapter of Ezekiel, ver. 2, where the angel is divinely commanded to go in, and take coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over Jerusalem. But in comparing these two passages, we find an essential difference in the operations described. The scenery in both visions is heavenly: there is in both a throne, and the presence of the Almighty surrounded by his cherubim. But in Ezekiel, where the scene is moveable, and not stationary, as in the Apocalypse, there is no altar before the throne, and the angel is there commanded to go in between the cherubim, that is, to the very throne itself, thence to take the coals which he is to scatter over the city. Here, in the Apocalypse,

there is the altar standing before the throne, and a censer and much incense are given to the officiating angel, and he makes an offering, representing (as we have shown) that of the Christian religion; and the fire, to be cast down, is not taken from the throne, but from the altar. The descent of which upon the earth therefore seems to imply, not merely the just judgments of God on a guilty world, but their connexion with the Christian religion.

The vision of Isaiah bears parallel resemblance both to this vision of Ezekiel, and to that exhibited in the fourth chapter of the Apocalypse, the scenery of which is continued in this chapter. In this (Is. vi. 6) the seraph takes the coal of fire *from the altar*. And the use and application of it is not to punish and destroy, but to purify the prophet from sin, and to ordain him to his holy office of foretelling the great evangelical events which were to take place in the Church of God.

The more we consider all these circumstances, the more inclined shall we be to conclude, that this preparatory vision concerns the *Christian Church*, and the succeeding visions under the trumpets, thus introduced, will confirm us in this opinion.

## PART III.

### SECTIONS II. and III.

#### *The four first Trumpets.*

CHAP. viii. ver. 6—12.

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire



mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth : and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was east into the sea : and the third part of the sea became blood ;

9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died : and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters ;

11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood : and the third part of the waters became wormwood : and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars ; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

In the prophetical parts of the Old Testament, the sound of trumpets generally signifies the approach of warfare and hostile invasion ; and most of the commentators on the Apocalypse agree that, in these visions, the trumpets have the same signification. But when they inquire,—Whence comes the armies of invaders ? and of what quality and description are they ? and what is the object against which their hostility is directed ? there is great difference of opinion.

After a long and patient investigation of these subjects, I am inclined to adopt the following conclusions : that the object of attack throughout the trumpets is one and the same—*the pure Christian Church* ; and that the assailants are not only its infidel and acknowledged foes, but also those, its most formidable enemies, who professing to belong to its body, have taught doctrines, and pursued measures, contrary to its purity, destructive of its peace, and almost of its existence, *the heretics and Anti-Christian corrupters*.

These conclusions result from the principle laid

down in my former work, and repeated in the preface to this,—that the Christian Church in general is the main object of the Apocalyptic, and indeed of all divine, prophecy. There is no reason for excepting the trumpets from this rule: it is, on the contrary, confirmed in their case by the preparation which we have just now contemplated. It is confirmed also by the fact which we proceed to establish, that in those visions of the trumpets whose meaning can be most accurately ascertained, the Christian Church is evidently the object of assault. Such it is seen to be in the fifth and sixth trumpets, and yet more clearly and confessedly in the seventh; where, (in chap. xi. ver. 15,) upon the angel's sounding, the heavenly voices immediately proclaim the victory, and award the kingdoms of the world to Christ; and that his church is to partake the happiness and glory of his victory and reign is apparent from the subsequent song of the elders, and indeed from all holy writ. In this seventh and last conflict the contending powers are fully declared, and we may reasonably suppose them the same in all the stages of the warfare, under the four first trumpets, as well as under the three last.

But under these four first, the description is so very short, the symbols of so general a character, so rapidly shown and passed over, that it seems difficult to collect from them particular and specific information. Yet this general and unrestricted form of the symbols employed, seems to have been the cause of so many and various expositions of them. The history of the Roman empire, as well as of the Christian Church, has been ransacked for events of warfare and sufferings, to be applied as a solution of these four short visions.

Ver. 7. *The first angel sounded; and there followed*

*hail and fire mingled with blood ; and they were cast upon the earth.*] The earth, as distinct from the heaven, the local habitation of the Deity, is the object of attack and injury in all of the four first trumpets. But in one part of it only at a time, according to a fourfold division of it, which occurs frequently in scripture, and is to be seen in this book of Apocalypse, (chap. xiv. ver. 7,) where God is described as the Creator of the world, under these four divisions, “ *Heaven, earth, sea, and the fountains of waters.*”

The attack of the first trumpet is upon “ the earth,” *εἰς τὴν γῆν*, which, being here contradistinguished from the *sea*, (the object of the next trumpet,) and being evidently only a part of the globe of the earth, that part which we call *land*, might be more fitly expressed in our language by the word *land*. Upon this division of the whole earth fall “ hail and fire mingled with blood.” Such a storm is described as falling upon Ægypt, by the divine command *literally*, (Exod. ix. 23, &c.) But here it must be received in its typical or spiritual sense. Now, in the writings of the prophets, Ἡ Γῆ, *the land*, as opposed to *the sea*, frequently signifies *the holy land*, the people of Israel ; while the Gentiles, especially those of the west, are spoken of by the word *sea* ; (see Isa. xxiv. *passim* ; xlii. 4 ; lx. 5, compared with Matth. xii. 21 ; Gen. x. 5 ; Ps. lxxv. 5 ; Ezek. xxvi. 15, 16 ; ) and between these, in the early days of Christianity, there was a very marked line of distinction ; the circumcised being bound to the observance of the ceremonial law in some parts, while the uncircumcised were free from that obligation, (see the Epist. to the Galatians.) In the New Testament they are also distinguished from each other by the several appellations of *Ἕθνη* and *Εἰσθνοί*, (Acts iv. 27 ; Rom. xv. 10, 11 ; ) and, in those early times,

some of the apostles and teachers were sent to address themselves to the circumcision, others to the Gentiles. Upon the Christian Israelites therefore we may suppose that the storm of hail and fire mingled with blood,—by which is generally understood the storm of persecution even unto death,—was destined to fall.

*And the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*] Trees and other vegetables represent the converts to the Christian religion; some of whom are “rooted and grounded in the faith;” others, “having no root,” cannot stand against the storm. (Isa. lxi. 3; xlv. 3, 4; 2 Kings xix. 30; Matth. iii. 10; xiii. 6, 21; xv. 13; Eph. iii. 17; Jude 12.) The third part of these is destroyed. The student will find advantage in comparing Ezekiel, ch. v. 12, and Zechariah xiii. 8, 9, with this passage. Two-thirds of the people of Israel are there destined to destruction at the siege of Jerusalem, and one-third to be dispersed among the nations; and these, after severe trials, (such as the Judaic Christians experienced, by which their numbers would be greatly diminished, as in the refiner’s fire,) are the remnant saved to be the true people of God. But in the passage before us, “all green grass is burnt up.” Grass, in scriptural language, represents the gaily flourishing, who exhibit a promising appearance in the Christian ranks, but, like herbage in hot burning climates, soon wither and die:—they “spring up quickly, with joy receive the word, but in time of *persecution* fall away.” (Mark iv. 17.)

The first persecution which afflicted the Church arose from the Jewish zealots, and fell upon their converted brethren. Persecution from this source was continued beyond the time when this prophecy was delivered, as may be seen in chap. ii. 9—12.

iii. 9; and the few ancient records of those early times, which have come down to us, show its continuance afterwards, (Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. cent. 1. ch. v.) On this passage Vitringa has observed, that in chap. ix. 4, the scorpion-locusts are commanded "not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing nor tree, but only the *men* who have not the seal of God on their foreheads;" whence he concludes, that the storm falling here upon the grass, &c. falls upon the Christians; which agrees with this exposition of the prophecy.

Ver. 8, 9. *And the second angel sounded, &c.*] At the sound of the second trumpet, the hostile invasion of the Anti-Christian powers falls upon the *sea*. Under this name, or that of *the Isles of the Sea*, or *Isles of the Gentiles*, the nations beyond the pale of the Jewish Church are frequently represented, (Gen. x. 5; Isa. xxiv. 14, 15; lx. 5, 9; xlii. 4, compared with Matth. xii. 21; Ezek. xxvi. 15, 16, &c.) Upon the Christians in these nations,—the Gentile converts,—the hostile attack descends under the symbol of "a great mountain burning with fire." A mountain in prophetic language signifies an high and eminent seat of power, civil or religious. From the Mountain *Sinai* the law was proclaimed, and it was the seat of the God and King of Israel. On Mount Sion afterwards stood his temple. And the increasing kingdom of Christ is described as a mountain filling the whole earth, (Isa. xxv. 6; Dan. ix. 16; ii. 35, 44.) And the worldly powers, opposed to God and his people, had their seat and worship on "the tops of the mountains, on every high hill." In such figurative language the Christian religion is called *Mount Sion*; and contrasted with the Jewish law, called Mount Sinai, (Heb. xii.



18, &c.) In this metaphorical sense, Babylon, that eminent seat of power and idolatry, hostile to true religion, is by the prophets addressed as a *mountain*, although its situation was low, upon the river Euphrates, and surrounded by an extensive plain. “Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain; I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks.” To which is added, “I will make thee a burnt mountain;” which words appear to be spoken prophetically of the utter destruction of Babylon, frequently foretold in other places.

The mountain before us is still burning; and as Babylon was to the ancient Church, so this, to the Christian Gentiles, is to become formidable and destructive. The effect is *blood*, upon a third part; and a third part of those that had *life* (which is, as I conceive, spiritual life in Christ) perishes. For to die, in the figurative language of scripture, is to lose the life which is in Christ, (see Notes, ch. iii. 1, 2.) And “Howl ye ships of Tarshish,” Isa. xxiii. 1, is addressed to the inhabitants of Tarshish, and not to their ships. Our Lord had foretold, under the same figure, “fire,” that his religion should be the cause of persecution, contentions, and bloodshed, for the trial of faith under which many should fall away, (Luke xii. 49, 51, &c.; 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.)

The Gentile converts were mingled with the heathen idolaters, whose power and corrupt religion was in due time, like Babylon, to become “a burnt mountain.” But the period of its extinction is not yet arrived; it is now burning. So, during the three first centuries, the idolatrous power was consuming away, from the fire inflicted upon it from above, from the altar of true religion in heaven, (ver. 5;) but so long as it continued burning, the persecu-

tion by the idolaters raged grievously against the Gentile Churches, and great was the number of the lapsed.

Ver. 10, 11. *And the third angel sounded, &c.*] A star, in prophetic language, signifies a prince, or eminent leader,—a leader in doctrine, (Numb. xxiv. 17; Matth. ii. 2; Rev. ii. 28; xxii. 16; i. 16.) Such an one falling from heaven, as did Satan, (Luke x. 18; 2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6; and Rev. xii. 4; ix. 1—12; where Satan and his fallen angels appear under this symbol,) corrupts the third part of the rivers and fountains of waters; that is, corrupts the streams and sources of pure doctrine, which are expressed by our Lord under the same metaphor, (John iv. 10, &c.; vii. 37—39.) The corruption of pure doctrine and introduction of heretical tenets are commonly attributed in scripture to Satan and his angels, (Matth. xiii. 29; 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15; Eph. ii. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 9; 1 Tim. v. 15;) and the corrupting doctrine, producing heresies, is expressed by the metaphors, wormwood, gall, bitterness, (Deut. xxix. 18; Amos v. 7; vi. 12; Acts viii. 23;) and the death here described is spiritual. (See note, chap. iii. 1.)

Under this trumpet therefore we seem to obtain *a general description* of those corruptions, which, at the instigation of Satan, were seen to invade and subvert a great part of the Christian Church by the preaching of *splendid* heretics. Such in the early times were Simon, Menander, Cerinthus, &c.

Ver. 12. *And the fourth angel sounded, &c.*] At the sound of the fourth trumpet, the same kind of stroke which had invaded the three preceding divisions of the creation, falls on the fourth part remaining, on the heavenly luminaries, the sun, moon, and

stars; a third part of these is smitten, and ceases to give light. When the Almighty took the children of Israel to be his peculiar people, he is said, in prophetic language, to “have planted the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth,” (Isa. li. 16.) It was a kind of new creation. Happiness was thereby founded for man on a new *basis*, and under new *lights*, unknown to the heathen. The divine ordinances of theocracy, under which that peculiar people flourished, are frequently expressed under the sublime images of the heavenly luminaries. So, when the darkening or removal of these are announced in prophecy, it is understood, that this divine polity shall fail, (Amos viii. 9, &c.; Matth. xxiv. 29.) But when the Jewish polity, expressed under the image of the sun and moon, is “ashamed and confounded,” the superior splendour of the Christian light shines forth under the same symbols.” “The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold,” (Isa. xxiv. 23; xxx. 26.) There is frequent allusion to this mode of expression in the apostolic writers, (Col. i. 12, 13; 2 Cor. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 4, &c.; James i. 17; 1 Pet. ii. 9; 1 John i. 5.) So that a third of the light taken from the heavenly luminaries implies a great failure in that invaluable light derived from the Christian revelation. The reign of darkness, ignorance, and superstition, did indeed return, after the light of the Gospel had been revealed; the more particular history of which will be unfolded in the following trumpets. The prophecy of the fourth trumpet, as of the three preceding, is only *general*. It follows the others in natural order, and is indeed the effect of the third. Corruption of knowledge necessarily produces ignorance; the corruption of Christianity produced Gothic darkness and superstition.

Thus I have supposed the four first trumpets to afford *a general view of the WARFARE which the Christian religion underwent soon after its first establishment*. The history delivered under the seals, after a solemn pause and silence, begins again, but with a different object in view. Under the seals, the gradual degeneracy of the Church is depicted; under the trumpets, the attacks which she had to sustain from her antichristian foes. And she is represented as undergoing various kinds of assault in her several divisions; these divisions of the Christian world, bearing analogy to the divisions, as they appear in scripture, of the natural world. 1. The storm of persecution in Judæa, which murdering the martyrs, and dispersing the preachers of the Gospel, is aptly represented by “hail and fire mingled with blood;” on the bursting forth of which the weak in faith fall away. 2. The Gentile persecution, arising from the Pagan religion, which is designated by a burning mountain. 3. The corruption of the waters of life by the early heretics and injudicious teachers. 4. The consequent failure in part of that bright and glorious light which beamed originally from the Christian revelation.

The information obtained from this exposition may be deemed scanty, when compared with the fruit of other interpreters. But I cannot venture upon *particular* illustrations, when the symbols are of so *general* a character, and so shortly expressed.

The commentators who have taken a very different course, in the development of the four first trumpets, and who look to the history of the declining Roman empire for their fulfilment, are by no means agreed as to the manner of that fulfilment: nor is this a matter of wonder, when we consider, that symbols of so general a character, and so shortly expressed, will admit of a vast latitude of

explanation to those who may think themselves entitled to apply them to particular events. “With so many calamities,” says Vitringa, “was the Roman empire afflicted at different periods, that it requires great judgment to ascertain which of them are to be assigned to each particular symbol. Fulfilment in abundance,” says he, “makes difficulty of choice.”

I would willingly do justice to those schemes of exposition, which, finding the completion of these prophecies in Roman history differ so widely from my own. But to insert them all, in a work like this, would be impracticable. I shall therefore confine myself to that portion of them which is selected for general information, by the learned compilers of the notes to the National Bible.<sup>1</sup>

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7. — *and there followed hail and fire.*] At the sounding of the first trumpet, ver. 7, the barbarous nations, like a storm of “hail and fire mingled with blood,” invade the Roman territories, and destroy “the third part of the trees,” that is, the trees of the third part of the earth, and “the green grass,” that is, both old and young, high and low, rich and poor together. On the death of Theodosius the Great, A. D. 395, the Huns, Goths, and other barbarians, like hail for multitude, and breathing fire and slaughter, broke in upon the best provinces of the empire both in the east and in the west, with greater success than they had ever done before. But by this trumpet I conceive were principally intended the irruptions and depredations of the Goths, under the conduct of the famous Alaric, who began his incursions in the same year 395, first ravaged Greece, then wasted Italy, besieged Rome, took and plundered the city, and set fire to it in several places.

<sup>1</sup> The notes which follow in this page, and the three following, are extracted from the National Bible.



The historians of the time give such terrible descriptions of the destruction caused by these incursions, that they might well indeed be compared to “hail and fire mingled with blood.” *Bp. Newton.*

—— *hail and fire.*] A tempest of hail and thunder, that throws down all before it, is a fit metaphor to express the calamities of war, from civil disturbances or foreign invasion, which often, like a hurricane, lays all things waste, as far as it can reach. See Is. xxxviii. 2 ; xxix. 6 ; Ezek. xiii. 13. The storm is here represented as destroying not only “the green grass,” which is more easily blasted, but also a great part of the trees, which are supposed more likely to withstand the violence of it. *Lowman.*

8 — *and as it were a great mountain.*] At the sounding of the second trumpet, “as it were a great mountain burning with fire ;” that is, a great warlike nation or hero, “cast into the sea, turneth the third part into blood, &c.” that is, falling on the Roman empire, maketh a sea of blood with horrible destruction of the cities and inhabitants ; for “waters,” as the angel afterwards explains to St. John, chap. xvii. 15, “are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues ;” and “the third part” means, throughout, the Roman empire, which was about a third part of the then known world. The next ravagers after Alaric and his Goths were Attila and his Huns, who, for the space of fourteen years, shook the east and the west with the most cruel fears, and deformed the provinces of each empire with all kind of plundering, slaughter, and burning. Attila, having first overcome the Eastern emperour, turned his arms towards the west, fell upon Italy, and filled all places between the Alps and the Apennines with terror and devastation. He was preparing to march upon Rome, but was diverted from

his purpose by a solemn embassy from the emperor, and the promise of an annual tribute. Such a man might properly be compared to “a great mountain burning with fire,” who really was, as he called himself, the scourge of God, and the terror of men; and boasted that he was sent into the world by God for this purpose, that, as the executioner of His just wrath, he might fill the earth with all kind of evils. *Bp. Newton.*

— *was cast into the sea.*] Great disorders and commotions, especially when kingdoms are moved by hostile invasions, are expressed, in the prophetic style, by carrying, or casting, mountains into the midst of the sea, Ps. xli. 2. *Lowman.*

10 *And the third angel sounded.*] At the sounding of the third trumpet, a great prince appears like ‘a star shooting from heaven to earth,’ a similitude not unusual in poetical diction. His coming therefore is sudden and unexpected, and his stay but short. “The name of the star is called Wormwood,” and he infects the third part of the rivers and fountains with the bitterness of wormwood; that is, he is a bitter enemy, and proves the author of grievous calamities to the Roman empire. It was within two years after Attila’s retreat from Italy, that Genseric king of the Vandals embarked from Africa with 300,000 Vandals and Moors, and arrived upon the Roman coasts, the emperor Maximus and the people not expecting or thinking of such an enemy: he marched towards Rome, and the city fell an easy prey into his hands, the inhabitants flying into the woods and mountains; he abandoned it to plunder, carried off immense booty, and a vast number of captives, and left the state so weakened, that in a short time it was utterly subverted. Some criticks understand “rivers” and “fountains” with relation to doctrines, and in this sense the application is

very proper to Genseric, who was a most bigoted Arian, and during his whole reign most cruelly persecuted the orthodox Christians. *Bp. Newton.*

12 *And the fourth angel sounded.]* At the sounding of the fourth trumpet, “the third part of the sun, moon, and stars,” that is, the great lights of the Roman empire, are eclipsed and darkened, and remain in darkness for some time. Genseric left the western empire in a weak and desperate state, in which it struggled about twenty years. At last, in A. D. 476, Odoacer, king of the Heruli, put an end to the very name of the western empire, and caused himself to be proclaimed king of Italy. His kingdom indeed was of short duration, being soon overthrown by Theodoric, who established the kingdom of the Ostrogoths in Italy. Thus the Roman “sun” was extinguished in the western empire; but the other lesser luminaries, “the moon” and the “stars,” still subsisted; for Rome was still allowed to have her senate and consuls, and other subordinate magistrates, as before. These lights probably shone more faintly under barbarian kings, than under Roman emperours, but they were not totally suppressed till Italy was made a province of the eastern empire; the whole form of government was then changed, the senate and all the former magistrates abolished, and Rome degraded to the level of other places: and from being the queen and empress of the world, was reduced to a poor dukedom, and made tributary to Ravenna, which she used to govern. *Bp. Newton.*

— *and the third part of the sun was smitten.]* Darkening, smiting, or setting of the sun, moon, and stars, says Sir Isaac Newton, are put for the setting of a kingdom, or the desolation thereof: and when darkness is opposed to light, Mr. Daubuz observes, as light is a symbol of joy and safety, so

darkness is a symbol of misery and adversity. See Jer. xiii. 16; Is. xiii. 10; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8. Thus, as the subject, order, and scene of action here, is the downfall of the Roman empire, and of the power and authority of Rome, the imperial city, there is fitly represented an entire extinguishing of all its authority and power. *Lowman.*

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Vitringa supposes the irruption of the barbarous nations upon the Roman empire to be presignified under the two first trumpets: but in the interpretation of the third he understands a corruption of Christian doctrine, by some notable leader of heresy; agreeing in this notion with Grotius, Cocceius, Launæus, Bengelius, Durham, and many more. And the fourth trumpet he imagines to denote the shameful degeneracy and ignorance of the Christian clergy, which began to be notorious in the reigns of Theodosius, Arcadius, and Honorius.

Ver. 13. *And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Wo, wo, wo, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound.*] Μεσσωπανημα, which is here translated “the midst of heaven,” will appear, by comparing it with chap. xiv. 6, and xix. 17, to signify the space between heaven and earth; for, as hath been before observed, throughout the scene of this vision, the heaven with God’s throne appears above, the earth and sea below, and between them is the intervening space which is here signified. In this space, the divine messenger, leaving heaven and hovering over the earth, proclaims

three *woes* or dreadful calamities, to fall upon its inhabitants, under the three remaining trumpets.

No greater calamity can befall the sons of men than the corruption, rejection, and loss of true and saving religion. Under the four first trumpets, an hostile invasion of the whole Christian Church, in its fourfold divisions, had taken place; but the view of its effects had been hitherto *general*, involving few events which could be particularly ascertained. The warfare is now exhibited more openly, and Antichrist will soon stand confessed. In the apostolic times, at the very latest date of which this vision was seen, Antichrist was already said to be come, (1 John ii. 18, 22; iv. 3; 2 John 7.) The mystery of iniquity did even then begin to work, (2 Thess. ii. 7,) and waxed worse and worse, (2 Tim. iii. 13.) Under the four first trumpets, which have their beginning from this period, the storm increases; and under the three last, it advances to its maturity, and produces the most special and desolating effects, by three distinct explosions.

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## PART III.

### SECTION IV.

#### *The fifth Trumpet, and first Woe.*

#### CHAP. ix. ver. 1--12.

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace: and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.



3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth : and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree : but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them but that they should be tormented five months : and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it ; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle ; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron ; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails ; and their power was to hurt men five months.

11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

12 One woe is past : and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

Ver. 1, 2. *And the fifth angel sounded, &c.*] A star is a teacher, or leader in doctrine. The angels or bishops of the seven Churches were such, appearing under the same symbol, (ch. i. 20.) But this star is no human Being : he is an angel who has fallen from heaven : for an angel he is called in the eleventh verse, “ the *angel* of the bottomless pit,” most certainly an evil angel. In the twelfth chapter we read that such an one was cast out from heaven to earth ; all which circumstances, taken together, will direct our attention to that prince of evil angels and of darkness, denominated *Satan* in the Scriptures, and so called in the twelfth chapter of this Revelation.

He in person, or at least one of his prime angels or ministers, seems to be designated in this passage.

He opens the *bottomless pit*, which, by comparing chap. xx. 1—3, and 2 Pet. ii. 4, will be found to be that part of Ἀδης, or hell, called *Gehenna*, the place of prison and punishment for wicked angels and men. The key of this horrid place is permitted to him for a time, and for a special purpose only; for in no wise does it belong to him, nor can he use it but for the purpose now permitted; the rightful possessor of it being that divine Lord who asserts himself to “have the keys of hell and death,” (ch. i. 18.)

The pit being thus opened, there ariseth from it “a smoke as from a great furnace, and the sun and air are darkened.” Under the third trumpet we have seen the fall of such a being from heaven to earth, corrupting the sources and streams of pure doctrine. This afforded a general view of the rise and progress of heresy in the Christian Church, (see note, ch. viii. 10, 11.) We have now before us the symbols of an heresy more particularly pestilential and destructive, to which the former corruptions under the third and fourth trumpets were conducive.

Ver. 3, 4. *And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth, &c.*] Locusts are described, by ancient and modern authors, as committing the most extraordinary ravages in the east; and the appearance of them is announced by a sudden deprivation of light. Like a thick cloud obscuring the sun, they settle upon the trees and herbs, devouring every thing before them, (Plinii Hist. Nat. xi. 29; Thuani Hist. tom. v. p. 364; Adamson’s Voyage to Senegal. See also Exod. x. 4—15.) But these locusts are of a yet more dreadful description: they have the power of scorpions, and stings in their tails, and their prey is not the grass-green plants and trees of

the field, but *men*. Yet those men only have they the power to hurt “who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads.” The men so excepted from their baneful power are of the same character with those divinely saved from “the great tribulation” in chap. vii; and who have there been shown to be Christians, by baptism, profession, faith, and practice, distinguished and directed by God’s holy Spirit. Such persons the scorpion-locusts are not permitted to injure; and from this restriction we may reasonably conclude, that the attack is of an heretical character, implying alienation from the life in Christ by the introduction of false doctrines; for this is precisely that species of mischief, from which the heaven-taught Christian, firm in faith, would escape, while the nominal and merely professed Christians would fall a prey to the invader. These, in verses 5 and 6, are not to be killed, but to undergo torment five months, a torment so afflictive, that they shall wish for death, but without being able to find it.

The whole description is highly metaphorical, and so, as it may reasonably appear, is this *death*. The persons who suffer under this plague, do not die *spiritually*. They lose not altogether their life in Christ, whose name they profess, although they have renounced his purer doctrines and laws: they may yet repent and return to him, and *live*.<sup>1</sup> But the horrible superstitions which they adopt, under the influence of their hellish teachers, take away from them the comforts of pure Christianity, and render the religion that is left, though it may perchance be nominally Christian, a torment, from which they wish to be relieved, but in vain.

<sup>1</sup> In explaining the prophecy of the witnesses, the commentators are generally agreed in understanding the words *die* and *death* in this spiritual sense. Why then should they not admit it here?

Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10.] A nearer view of these invaders, exhibited in this remaining description, shows them,

1st. In shape, "*like horses prepared unto battle.*" The insect locust is observed by naturalists to have such resemblance; and of this warlike appearance, in a spiritual sense, were these polemical heretics.

2dly. "*On their heads were, as it were, crowns of gold.*" But the true crown of gold is not theirs; this is the peculiar ornament and distinction of Christ himself and his elders, and of all those who, by his example and power, overcome sin and the evil world, (ch. iii. 11; ii. 10; iv. 4; vi. 2.) But these deceivers have a base counterfeit of this crown, "*as it were, crowns of gold.*" They boast a show of religion, without possessing its truth and efficacy.

3dly. "*Their faces were as the faces of men.*" This appearance in an animal, seems to imply somewhat of a reasoning power, a means of persuasion. Ignatius, who wrote at the time when the Gnostic heresiarchs began to prevail, calls these deceivers *Θηρία Ανθρωπομορφα*, wild beasts under the appearance of men. (Epist. ad Smyrnæos.)

4thly. "*They had hair as the hair of women.*" In the eastern nations of antiquity the women wore their hair long, which was accounted effeminate and disgraceful to men; yet, under this effeminate appearance, assumed to allure, they destroy. For,

5thly. "*Their teeth are as the teeth of lions.*" (See Joel i. 6; Ps. lvii. 4; lviii. 6; 1 Pet. v. 8,) ready to devour.

6thly. "*They had breastplates, as it were, of iron.*" Iron in appearance, as their defensive armour, but not of ironlike strength; for the controversial armour of the Gnostics made but a poor defence against the arguments of the philosophers and of the Christian fathers.



7thly. “*The sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses, running to battle.*” This is a lively description of the charge made upon the Christian Church, by numerous swarms of heretics in the second century. For a time it seemed irresistible, and to bear down all before it.

8thly. “*They had tails like scorpions, and stings were in their tails.*” By the appointment of the Creator, the face, in its perfection, is peculiar to man, the tail to brutes. The brutal part is employed to overthrow pure religion, by the indulgence of brutal passions. The *sting of death* is sin, (1 Cor. xv. 56.) Sheltered under the Gnostic doctrines, the most loose and debasing morality prevailed in a great part of the world professedly Christian.

9thly. “*Their power was to hurt men five months.*” In the Greek, *τοὺς Ἀνθρώπους*, the men, the Christian men, who have been baptized into that profession, but are not marked with the seal of God, “the holy Spirit, by which the Lord knoweth them that are his,” (2 Tim. ii. 19.) The continuance of these antichristian invaders in power and prosperity is five months, which, interpreted as prophetic numbers, (each day implying a year, and thirty of these in each month,) make one hundred and fifty years.

10thly. “*They had a king over them, the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew is Abaddon, but in the Greek hath his name Apollyon.*” Their leader and king is not one of their own insect race, but an angel, an evil angel, the angel of the bottomless pit, or Gehenna, which he had opened to favour their irruption; whose Greek name will remind the biblical student of the *Αἰρέσεις ἀπολείας* foretold by St. Peter, (2 Pet. ii. 1;) and also of the name given by our Lord to Judas Iscariot, after Satan had taken possession of him, *ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπολείας*. (John xvii. 12.)



After this view of the figurative language employed under this trumpet, we may observe, that as swarms of locusts are used in the Old Testament to signify and prefigure armies devastating the holy land, the heritage of God, in which the people of Israel enjoyed superior blessings and protection; so, under the New Testament, such an invasion, led by an evil angel from the depths of hell, must be understood to have for its object the Christian Church, the heritage of Christ.

And these assailants do not injure the Church by force of arms, for then, how could the sealed escape? Under such trying circumstances, when a conquering and ferocious army overruns a country with fire and sword, the sealed, the faithful and acknowledged servants of God, undergo their share of the common calamity, alleviated indeed in their case by his divine Providence, but not entirely removed. But from the contamination of a pestilential heresy they might, and would be secure; their principles and practice, and the seal of God, would save them. For an irruption of this description, we must therefore look in the annals of ecclesiastical history, to fulfil the prophecy under this trumpet.

We collect from other passages of prophetic scripture, that such heresies were preordained, to try and prove the Christians. "There must be heresies among you," says St. Paul, "that they which are approved may be made manifest among you," (1 Cor. xi. 19.) And in the apostolical times such heresies had begun to work; but, as Eusebius tells us, without much success; and he dates their mischievous prevalence in the Church of Christ from the times of Ignatius's martyrdom, or the latter days of the emperor Trajan, and beginning of those of Adrian, (Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 7. iii. 32.) The same valuable author has preserved for us a frag-

ment from the works of Hegesippus, who lived in the times of Adrian, and he says, that “until those times, the Church had continued a pure and incorrupt virgin; for that those who attempted to corrupt the wholesome canon of evangelical doctrine, had hitherto remained in obscurity. But when the sacred company of the apostles was departed, and the generation of those who were thought worthy to hear their divine preaching was gone, then the conspiracy of impious deceit had its beginning; then to the preaching of the truth did they dare boldly to oppose *their knowledge falsely so called*.”

By this description he plainly refers to the Gnostics, the first great host of corrupters who overspread the Christian Church.

Clemens Alexandrinus also, speaking of the Gnostics, asserts that they were not a pestilential heresy before the times of Adrian, (Strom. lib. vii. 17; viii. 27.) From Irenæus, a nearer witness of those times, we collect the same information; and Epiphanius, quoting from Irenæus, says, that the Gnostic heresies burst out of the earth together at one time, like mushrooms, the lurking places of many *scorpions*, (contr. Hæreses, lib. i. 31.)

Saturninus, followed by Cerdo, and by Marcion, who afterwards corrupted the Churches of Italy, by Bardesanes, Tatian, Severus, and their innumerable disciples, spread the poison over the east; while Basilides in Africa, followed by Carpocrates, Valentine, &c., overran the rest of the Christian world.

Numerous churches and communities of these deceiving and deceived heretics continued to abound, and to bring scandal on the Christian name, during that century, and the larger half of the next. But in their progress they were powerfully opposed by

the orthodox and pure Christians ; by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen ; and in their wild dreams of philosophy by the Platonic philosophers under Plotinus ; at whose death, in the year 270, they were almost entirely sunk and gone. So that, taking all these accounts together, we find evidence that the duration of the Gnostics, *as a prevailing heresy and pestilential swarm*, (for it is in that view only that, consistently with the symbols, we are to consider them,) was about 150 years, the period foretold.<sup>1</sup>

The Gnostics are represented to us by the fathers of the Church, who lived in their days, to have derived their religious principles from the Nicolaitanes ; but as carrying their mischievous notions to the utmost excess. To the wildest dreams of a visionary, fantastic philosophy, derived from the oriental schools, and which they incorporated with the Christian doctrines, corrupting or rejecting any part of the sacred writings unfavourable to their tenets, many of them added, as may be expected, the most immoral practices. Particulars of these it is not necessary to adduce ; they are to be collected from Irenæus and Tertullian, from Plotinus, the Platonic philosopher ; from other writers, who lived after this rage had passed over, Theodoret, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Epiphanius. The English reader may obtain a general notion of them from Mosheim's History, (second century, chap. v.)

From the account now obtained, first, of the scriptural import of the figurative language of this trumpet ; and, secondly, of the character of the Gnostics, and their period, it may appear, that the pro-

<sup>1</sup> If the reader should be disposed to consider the period of the Gnostics, which has occasioned some doubt and controversy, with more attention, he may be referred to a long note in my former publication, where he will find a clue to direct him in further inquiries on this subject. See page 239.

phetic representation was probably fulfilled by this first general and extensive apostasy. But it will be satisfactory to find the fulfilment in some very apposite and striking particulars. In the first verse, “the Star fallen from heaven,” called afterwards “the king or leader of the locusts, the angel of the bottomless pit, the destroyer,” has been clearly seen to be Satan, or some distinguished minister of that fallen angel. Now the ancient writers of the Church, and her prime historian Eusebius, ascribe the introduction of the great Gnostic heresy to the agency of the devil, (ὁ μισοκαλὸς Δαιμὼν,) who having, as he says, attempted in vain to overthrow the Church by persecution external, attacked it internally by his agents,—by professed Christians,—leading some of the faithful to the deep of destruction, εἰς βυθὸν ἀπολείας, in which expressions there is a remarkable coincidence with the origin of this woe, as stated in the prophecy, “the pit of the bottomless deep,” and likewise with the name of its leader, Apollyon, (Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 7.) He represents this attack also as a warlike invasion, calling its leader πολέμωτατος, which agrees with the description before us, and with the alarm sounded by the trumpet. Justin Martyr is also represented by the same historian as ascribing this invasion to diabolical operation, (lib. iii. c. 26.)

What can express so forcibly the dark, perplexed, uncomfortable philosophy of the oriental schools, which mingling with Christianity, so miserably debased it, as these fumes of black smoke arising from the infernal deep, and obscuring the sun? The historian, in describing the invasion of the Gnostic heresies, uses nearly the same figures of speech, comparing the Churches of Christ to the most resplendent luminaries before that attack, and thereby intimating how greatly their splendour was darkened by it.



In verses 3 and 4, a swarm of locusts arises with the smoke. Now the resemblance of the Gnostic teachers to such a swarm, in respect both to their numbers, and the mischief they occasioned, is so striking, that historians who did not entertain the most distant thought of applying to them this prophecy, and who merely related what they found recorded in the annals of those times, have described them in the very terms by which the scorpion-locusts are described in this vision. Such is the relation of the learned Jacob Brucker, who, in his critical History of Philosophy, after speaking of a sect of oriental philosophers in the first century, adds: “and when many from that sect had betaken themselves to the Christian religion, and had preposterously attempted to unite their precepts to it,—hence *there arose those swarms of heresies, which, priding themselves in the name of Gnostics, like winged insects, went flying throughout all the Churches of Asia and Africa, and contaminated the simplicity of the most holy religion with the most absurd nonsense; and continuing their progress to the Jews also, and even to the Gentiles, miserably corrupted the national philosophy of both these; invented wild and monstrous notions, confirmed and increased the wide-reigning fanaticism, disseminated multitudes of spurious books, and corrupted the whole world with the very worst doctrines.*”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Exque eâ sectâ plures, cùm ad Christianam religionem se contulissent, præceptaque sua com hâc præposterè conjungere conati essent, exorta esse illa hæresium examina, quæ Gnosticorum nomine superbientia, muscarum iustar, per omnes Asiæ atque Africæ ecclesias pervolitârunt, et nugis ineptissimis simplicitatem sanctissimæ religionis contaminârunt. Ad Judæos quoque et ipsos Gentiles progressa, domesticam utrorumque philosophiam misere corruerunt, sententiarum monstra excogitârunt, fanaticismum late regnantem confirmârunt et auxerunt, librorum spuriorum segetes disseminârunt, pessimis que doctrinis totum commaculârunt orbem. —*Bruckeri Hist. Crit. Philosophiæ*, tom. ii. page 639.



In verses 3, 5, 10, the locusts are described as having the tails, the stings, the power of *scorpions*. These being nearly related to the race of serpents in offensive character, are considered by the scriptural writers as a part of the power of the infernal enemy, (Luke x. 19. xi. 12.) Now Eusebius ascribes the rise and progress of the Gnostic heresies to *some serpent-like power*; and compares their latent mischief to that of *a lurking reptile*, (lib. iv. 7.) And Tertullian, in his treatise entitled *Scorpiace*, (that is, antidote against the scorpions,) directly compares the Valentinians and other Gnostic teachers to *scorpions*, instancing the points of resemblance in the dangerous poison of a little contemptible animal; in their infinite kinds and varieties, all armed in the same manner with a *tail*, and produced by *heat*.

By these quotations it is intended to show, that those Christian fathers and writers, who lived nearest to the times of the great Gnostic heresy, conceived such notions of it as occasioned them to represent it under the same images as the scorpion locusts appear in this vision.

The comparison needs not to be pursued farther. If the reader will turn back and peruse the remaining verses in which this prophecy is contained, with the remarks upon them, beginning at page 188, and keeping in mind what he has learned of the Gnostic history, he will probably admit, that the Gnostics, springing up *suddenly, in immense numbers*, from the dark and proud philosophy of the east, and possessing themselves of many of the Christian Churches, *darkening their primitive lustre, poisoning their principles, and debasing their morals*, yet not succeeding against *all* the members of the congregations, but only the corrupt part. and not destroying utterly in these the foundation of their faith in Christ, but leaving room for their repentance and return to the

true Church, and continuing to flourish about the space of one hundred and fifty years, have wonderfully fulfilled this prophecy.

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From the ancient commentators, Andreas Cæsariensis, Arethas, Primasius, Victorinus, we are able to collect very little worth notice upon the vision of the fifth trumpet. Their notions are upon the whole very crude, weakly imagined, and slenderly supported. But in “the pit of the bottomless deep” they descry *Gehenna*, the place of eternal punishment, and some of them recognized Satan as the angel opening it, and as the king of the scorpion-locusts, which they imagine to represent his angels, punishing the sinful; and the five months they suppose to be the duration of an intense suffering, afterwards to receive some remission; or who, say they, could abide it?

Bede, Haymo, Aquinas, and almost all the commentators of the middle ages, have understood the locusts to represent swarms of heretics, the precursors of Antichrist. That they represent heretics is adopted by a great number of commentators in the reformed Churches; among whom is the primate archbishop Usher, and Bochart, says Vitringa, *in his heart*. Gagnæus asserts, that almost all the commentators to his time understood this trumpet as alluding to the heretics; and cardinal Bellarmine, followed by the papal Church, interprets it of Luther and his followers, the most notorious and dangerous of heretics in their estimation.

Grotius, almost alone and unsupported, applies the symbols of this vision to the Jews and their zealots, preceding the destruction of Jerusalem.

Joseph Mede seems to have been the first commentator of note who interpreted this trumpet as fulfilled in Mahomet and his followers. This inter-

pretation has been generally received in this country with some little variation. The learned and able editors of that useful work, our National Bible, have drawn their annotations on this part of the Apocalypse from this quarter; and it seems to me that I cannot do that justice which I owe to this system of interpretation more fairly, in the small compass allowed, than by copying their selection of notes.<sup>1</sup>

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Ver. 1. — *a star fall from heaven, &c.*] Stars, in the language of prophecy, signify angels; and the expression here, of a star falling from heaven, or an angel coming down from heaven with a key to open the bottomless pit, seems to denote the permission by Divine Providence of those evils and calamitous events, which are described as ensuing, which could not have happened except by His permission, and according to the wise and holy order of the Divine government. *Lowman.*

2. *And he opened the bottomless pit;*] This prison of Satan, and of his angels, is permitted to be opened for the just punishment of apostate churches, who would not repent of their evil works. Here is something more terrible than we have hitherto seen. Hell opens, and Satan appears, followed by an army of a stronger figure than St. John has any where else described. *Lowman, Bossuet.*

— *and there arose a smoke*] That is, a false religion, the religion of the impostor Mahomet, was set up, which filled the world with darkness and error. *Bp. Newton.*

3. *And there came out of the smoke locusts*] Here is an allusion to the habits of locusts, which, as Pliny and the eastern historians tell us, breed in pits and deep slimy holes in the latter part of the summer; and from the eggs or spawn there laid arise the vast

<sup>1</sup> These follow in this and the four next pages.

swarms in the spring following. By this, in the same figurative language which is used by the prophet Joel, (Joel i. 6 ; ii. 5—7,) are described the terrible forces of the Saracens and Arabians under Mahomet and his successors, their leaders ; invading and ravaging not only the European kingdoms, but large tracts both of Asia and Africa : their false and impious religion was as smoke and darkness arising out of hell, and their armies fitly resembled locusts for multitude, and both of them together were as mischievous to the minds and liberties of men, as the poison of serpents is to the human body. *Pyle.*

4. — *not hurt the grass, &c.]* This shews that they were not natural, but symbolical, locusts. *Jos. Mede.*

—— *but only those men which have not the seal, &c.]* That is, those who are not the true servants of God, but are corrupt and idolatrous Christians. Now it appears from history, that in those countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe, where the Saracens extended their conquests, the Christians were generally guilty of idolatry in the worshipping of saints, if not of images ; and it was the pretence of Mahomet and his followers to chastise them for it, and to re-establish the unity of the Godhead. The parts which remained most free from the general infection were Savoy, Piedmont, and the southern parts of France, which were afterwards the habitation and nurseries of the Waldenses and Albigenses ; and it is very memorable that, when the Saracens approached those parts, they were defeated with great slaughters in several engagements. *Bp. Newton.*

5. *And to them it was given that they should not kill, &c.]* As they were to hurt only the corrupt and idolatrous Christians, so these they were not to kill, but only to torment, and to bring on them such



calamities as would make them weary of their life. Thus, though the Saracens greatly harassed and tormented the Greek and Latin churches, they did not utterly extirpate the one or the other. They besieged also Constantinople, and plundered Rome, but did not make themselves masters of the one city or the other. *Bp, Newton.*

— *but that they should be tormented five months :*] Evidently alluding to the time, during which natural locusts commit their devastations, and after which they die. They are hatched, as Bochart observes, about the spring, and die at the latter end of summer, thus living about five months. *Lowman.*

It is again mentioned at ver. 10, that “their power was to hurt men five months.” If these months be taken for natural months in the interpretation of the prophecy, then the meaning is, that the Saracens, after the manner of locusts, made their excursions during the five summer months, and retreated in the winter. And it appears from history that this was their usual practice: in particular it is related, that at the siege of Constantinople they always retreated at the approach of winter, and renewed their attacks during the summer months, for seven successive years. But if, as seems more probable, and as accords with the prophetic style, these months designate each a space of thirty prophetic days or years, then the whole period denoted is one hundred and fifty years. And accordingly we shall find, that, though the empire of the Saracens had a longer duration, yet within that period they made their principal conquests, and their power of “tormenting men” was chiefly exerted. It appears from their history, that their greatest conquests were made from the year 612, when Mahomet first began to propagate his imposture, to the year 762, when the caliph Almansor



built Bagdad, to fix there the seat of his empire. Syria, Persia, India, and the greatest part of Asia, Egypt, and the greatest part of Africa, Spain, and some parts of Europe, were subdued within that period : but when the caliphs fixed their habitation at Bagdad, then their armies ceased from ravaging like locusts, and they assumed more the character of a settled nation. *Bp. Newton.*

— *as the torment of a scorpion,*] The sting of a scorpion, “when he striketh a man,” is severe, attended with inflammation and violent pain. *Lowman.*

6. — *shall men seek death,*] That is, so great shall be the calamities of those times, that men shall be tired of life. *Jos. Mede.*

7. *And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses*]— In the following verses, the nature and qualities of locusts are described, partly in allusion to the properties of natural locusts, and the description given of them by the prophet Joel, (see Joel ii. 1, &c. and the notes there,) and partly in allusion to the habits and manners of the Arabians. Many authors have observed, that the head of a locust resembles that of a horse ; whence the Italians call them *cavalette*, or little horses. And the Arabians have in all ages been famous for their horses and horsemanship ; it being well known that their strength consists chiefly in their cavalry. *Bp. Newton.*

— *on their heads were as it were crowns like gold.*] Alluding to the head-dress of the Arabians, who constantly wore turbans or mitres. *Bp. Newton.* The “crowns of gold” may also signify the success and extent of their dominion ; for there never was a nation which extended its power so widely, or in so short a space of time reduced beneath its yoke so many countries and kingdoms. *Jos. Mede.*

7, 8. — *faces were as the faces of men. And — hair,*

&c.] The Arabians wore their beards, or at least their mustachios, like men, while the hair of their heads was flowing and plaited like that of women. *Bp. Newton.*

8. — *as the teeth of lions.*] That is, strong to devour, Joel i. 6. *Jos. Mede.*

9. — *breastplates, as — of iron ;*] Locusts have a hard shell or skin, which has often been called their armour. This figure is designed to express the defensive, as the former was the offensive arms of the Saracens. *Bp. Newton.*

— *and the sound of their wings, &c.*] Hereby signifying the rapidity of their conquests. *Pyle.* Natural locusts fly with so great a noise of their wings, that they may be taken for birds. *Bp. Newton.*

10. *And they had tails like unto scorpions.*] They are thrice compared to “scorpions,” ver. 3, 5, 10 ; and had “stings in their tails, &c.” that is, wherever they carried their arms, there they distilled the venom of a false religion. *Bp. Newton.*

11. *And they had a king over them.*] Although the natural locusts have no king, (see the observation of Agur, Prov. xxx. 27,) yet these figurative locusts have one, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, that evil spirit, the prince of the power of darkness, who, from the constant evils he is designing and doing in the world, is called “the destroyer.” *Lowman.*

— *Abaddon, — Apollyon, &c.*] The one name in Hebrew, the other in Greek, means “the destroyer.” Mr. Mede imagines that here is some allusion to the name of Obodas, the common title of the kings of that part of Arabia, from which Mahomet came, as Pharaoh was the common name of the kings of Egypt, and Cesar of the emperours of Rome ; and such allusions are not unusual in the style of Scripture. *Bp. Newton.*

The selection of these notes, taken from the followers of Mede, is judicious, and shows their tenets to the best advantage. The application of the “fallen star” to Mahomet, by Daubuz, Bishop Newton, and others, is not admitted. Indeed, Mede himself had not adopted it, but on the contrary affirmed, in very strong language, that this star is no other than *ipsissimus Draco et Satanas*, (Clavis, pars ii. syn. iv.) As to these symbolical locusts, whatever they represent, whether hosts of armed men, or swarms of heretical teachers, they are clearly restricted in ver. 4, from hurting any thing or person, “but only those men who have not the seal of God on their foreheads,” that is, as Bishop Newton properly states, the corrupt Christians. But did the armies of Mahomet fulfil this commission? or was it possible, that without a constant interposition of divine miracles they could fulfil it? Were there no true servants of God in the vast and populous Christian countries which these terrible depredators overran with such relentless violence? and if there were such, how and when did they escape the severe inflictions which all others underwent in their persons, their property, their religion? <sup>1</sup> Can it be true, as is said to accommodate this supposed event to the prophecy, that the *sealed* were the inhabitants of those parts of the Christian world where the Saracen forces never entered, the unsealed those which were subdued by them? On the contrary, it is well known and acknowledged, that the Europeans, who escaped this devastation, were very little, if at all, superior in knowledge and purity to the Asiatics,

<sup>1</sup> Observe our Lord’s injunction, formed upon this supposition, that, according to the settled economy of this world, the good and the bad, in the time of general invasion, are inseparable, and must fall together: “Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.”—*Matth.* xiii. 29.

and Africans who sunk under it; and that, at this very time, they were so debased in ignorance and superstition as to become an easy prey to the papal domination, then beginning its corrupt and tyrannical career. The truth is, that the sealed are to be found in all Christian countries, mingled with the unsealed; and the invasion which could hurt the one, and not the other, may be understood to be that of an universally extending heresy, but not that of an hostile army. The good Christian, stedfast in the primitive faith, would not be hurt by heretical teachers; but how could he escape from the Saracene sword?

Farther, we may ask, whether it is shown, or indeed how it can be shown, that the *nominal Christians*, who underwent the rigours of the Saracene invasions and domination during one hundred and fifty years, did “seek for death, and desire to die,” without being able to attain it. This is surmised by Mede and his followers, who have concluded that such must have been the consequence of their immense sufferings. But if this be all, there is in this no particular or appropriate evidence which may seem to warrant the divine prediction, as applied to this case only, for such may be equally the case under all such sufferings. In a spiritual sense indeed they might wish to die, that is, to be dead to a sense of the religion which they had professed, and wishing to adopt the Mahometan tenets, which they knew to be false, in order to enjoy the privileges attached to them. But this is not the sense in which this part of the prediction has been hitherto applied. Moreover, in respect to this period of one hundred and fifty years, it cannot be shown, nor has there been any attempt to show, that the Saracene conquests and spoliations were confined to this space of time. It is only asserted that their “*principal* conquests



were made, and their power of tormenting *chiefly* exerted during this period. But the period of these conquests, and of the calamities accompanying them, are full well known to have occupied more than double this portion of historical space; and that other warlike nations, professing the same religious creed, have renewed them; and that now, after a lapse of twelve hundred years, the Mahometan powers are still in possession of the much greater part of the conquests already accomplished.

Vitranga, with his usual learning and industry, has reviewed the principal expositions of this trumpet, as published in his time; and, among the rest, this of Joseph Mede, which he rejects, and proposes the irruption of the Goths into Italy as fulfilling the symbols of the vision. The devastation of these ferocious conquerors he accounts to have continued one hundred and fifty years, beginning with Alaric in the eighth century. But in this application of the prophecy his failure is so evident, as to render refutation unnecessary.

Upon the whole, it must be left to the judgment of critical enquirers in future, to determine, whether the restrictions in verses 4 and 5 do not exclude all hosts and swarms, but those of heretical teachers, from being considered as represented by the scorpion-locusts; <sup>1</sup> and whether the death, in verse 6, is not to be interpreted in a spiritual sense only;—and if these questions should be answered in the affirm-

<sup>1</sup> In a letter with which I was honoured by the late Bishop Horsey, dated St. Asaph, March 20, 1806, his lordship says: "I have received much pleasure in reading your exposition of the vision of the locusts. You have rescued that portion of the prophecy from much erroneous and absurd interpretation. I have for some years been fixed in the opinion, though I have never written upon the subject, that the apocalyptic locusts represent heretics, not soldiers." It is well known that the bishop entertained notions not conformable to mine, respecting some other predictions.



ative, whether the period in history of one hundred and fifty years, during which the innumerable heresiarchs of Gnostical character darkened and disfigured the infant Church of Christ, exposing it to scandal, misrepresentation, and additional persecution, be not sufficiently responsive to the symbols exhibited in this vision.

As to the claims of the Saracene Mahometans, it may perhaps appear, that they are to be more completely satisfied in the interpretation of the subsequent vision.

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### PART III.

#### SECTION V.

#### *The Sixth Trumpet.*

##### CHAP. ix. ver. 13—21.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand : and I heard the number of them.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone : and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions : and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails : for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk;

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Ver. 13. *And the sixth angel sounded.*] It is observed by Vitranga, that the principal commentators have differed less in their opinion upon this vision,—the second woe and sixth trumpet,—than upon most others. It has been very generally explained to prefigure the terrible invasions and devastations by the nations adopting the Mahometan creed, the Saracens, the Turks, the Tartars, by some or all of them; and Michaelis, who is backward in giving his approbation to any exposition of these visions, has declared “that this prophecy may be very well applied to the irruptions of the Saracens, the Turks, and the Tartars.” (Introd. to New Test. ch. xxiii. sect. 7.)

Ver. 13, 14, 15. *I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, &c.*] The voice is originally from the throne; it is *one* voice, (so it should be translated,) no power of command could be derived from any other quarter; but it passes through the horns of the golden altar, appearing to proceed from them. This is the altar of incense which in the scenery of these visions is seen to stand before the throne, as, in the holy of holies, in the temple, it stood before the cherubim, the local throne of Jehovah. Here atonement was wont to be made annually for the sins of the people, (Exod. xxx. 1—10.) A decree coming from such a quarter, and through such a medium, and attended by the alarming sound of the trumpet introducing a *woe*,

bespeaks the wrath of God kindling on a religious account, and a severe visitation on his people of the Christian Church. Four angels, the ministers of vengeance, are called forth from their confinement, to lead an host of assailants empowered and commissioned to slay a third part of the men, of *the men* το τρίτον των ανθρωπων, (the article being improperly omitted in the received translation.) And *the men* are the *Christian men*, (compare Acts xv. 17, and verses 4 and 20 in this chapter,) whose offences against God, on the score of religion, must be great indeed at this time, to call forth such a punishment. The nature and extent of these sins will appear in the 20th and 21st verses of this chapter, for there they are enumerated.

By these four angels, answering in point of number to the four horns of the altar, Paræus, and after him Mede and his followers, have understood four nations, or tribes of men, to be prefigured. But Vitringa properly observes, that the angels do not represent the nations, but their leaders; as in the foregoing trumpet-woe, where the host of assailants have an evil angel for their leader or king. The four angels were appointed and pre-ordained to lead this irruption; they were stationed at the great river Euphrates, from which quarter it therefore seems that the armies to be led by them were to come. They were bound there, that is, not permitted to move in the execution of their appointed commission, till a certain hour, day, month, year, when the iniquity of *the men* should be ripe for such a punishment.

Various commentators have endeavoured to show, that the particular nations or tribes, whom they have supposed the instruments of this divine vengeance, whether on the Roman empire or the Christian Church, were settled upon Euphrates, or proceeded

from that quarter, or at least made their irruption by passing that eastern boundary of the Holy Land, and of the Roman empire. The vision seems to imply some such Euphratean origin of the evil; but the notion that *four* nations or tribes were to come from thence for the execution of this commission, seems not to be fairly deduced. The number four is used in prophecy indefinitely (as hath been shown) for a large and perfect number. Thus the “four winds of heaven” comprehend the whole globe divided into its quarters, (Dan. xi. 4; Matth. xxiv. 31; Rev. vii. 1;) and the angels being four, answering to the four cardinal points of the altar, appears to imply the fulness of the decree, and severity of its operation, not a horn of the altar being left unoccupied, so that expiation should be made upon it for the reversal of the order.

Ver. 16—19. *And the number of the army of horsemen, &c.*] Immediately as the command for loosing the bounden angels is issued, the consequence of it appears: an army of cavalry, whose immense numbers are expressed in those indefinite terms, which in other places of Scripture are used to denote prodigious quantities, (Dan. vii. 10; Ps. lxviii. 17.) The horsemen are described to have breastplates of fire, (or appearance of fire,) of jacinth (or hyacinthine colour,) and brimstone. Breastplates are not arms offensive, but defensive, and the slaughter is not done by these, nor by any weapon from the hands of the horsemen, but from the mouths and tails of their horses, their heads being as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths issue fire, smoke, and brimstone, by which it is expressly said, and again repeated, that “the third part of the men was killed.” And injury also proceeds from the *tails* of the horses, which are like serpents, hav-

ing heads, that is, the heads of serpents upon them, with which they do hurt.

This will appear to be no ordinary warfare; it is not carried on merely by the common charges of a cavalry, the swords and spears of the riders; the πληγαι, or strokes of injury are inflicted from the mouths and tails of the animals upon which they are mounted. The Christian warfare is a warfare of doctrine proceeding from the mouth; its conquests were foretold as thence proceeding, for the Messiah is described as “smiting the earth with the rod of *his mouth*,” (Is. xi. 4; xlix. 2;) and in the nineteenth chapter of this Revelation he appears in this character at the head of his armies, “a sharp sword going out of *his mouth*.” This has been clearly understood to signify that it is not by force of arms, but by powerful doctrine, that he shall prevail. “I will fight against them, says he, with the sword of my mouth,” (Rev. ii. 16.) His witnesses, in chapter xi, employ the same instrument, “fire proceedeth out of their *mouth*.” From the *mouths* of his opponents come also the principal injuries which they inflict, (Rev. xiii. 2, 5; xii. 15, 16; xvi. 13.) So that in this warfare upon the Christian Church, there is, united with the assault of armies, that more formidable one of corrupt and blasphemous doctrine. By *fire*, in the figurative language of Scripture, devastating warfare is denoted; by smoke, as we have seen under the fifth trumpet, dark ignorance, covering dangerous doctrines; and brimstone, in union with fire, implies an infernal origin of the mischief, (Rev. xix. 20; xxi. 8.) And as these issue from the mouths of the brutes employed, and not of the men, we may see cause to infer, that the destructive doctrine is not founded so much on rational argument, which is peculiar to man, as upon the promise of animal gratification, which is the motive of beasts.



And we shall be further confirmed in this notion by observing, that the injury is done in part by the serpent-headed tails of these brutes; for the tail is the part of an animal which marks him *brutal* in contradistinction to human; and is used in prophetical Scripture to denote baseness, degradation, and subjection to impure passions. “The prophet that speaketh lies, he is the tail,” (Is. ix. 15; Deut. xxviii. 13; Rev. xii. 4.)

Ver. 20, 21. *And the rest of the men, which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, &c.*] The part of the prophecy, contained in these two verses, is very important, as revealing the character and description of the men in the Christian Church, upon whom these punishments were to fall; for from this circumstance we are enabled to collect the time when the prediction would come to its fulfilment, which could not take place before that period should arrive, when the sins described were *generally* prevalent; for this must have been the case, when even they who were permitted to escape this terrible visitation, were deeply and unrepentantly infected with them.

The sins are these: 1. The worship of *δαίμονια* dæmons, who are shown, by Vitranga and others, to be fictitious gods and deified mortals, in opposition to the only true God; 2. The worship of idols; 3. All manner of impurity, injustice, and immorality, under the scriptural designation of murders, sorceries, fornications, and thefts. This was not the character of the Christian men in the three first centuries. The degeneracy began then, but was of slow procedure. The low estate of the Church in temporal enjoyment, and its exposure to frequent and severe persecution, preserved it, in a considerable degree, from the intrusion of the worldly, who

afterwards made it subservient to their ambition. And in the two centuries succeeding the lamentable change from divine knowledge to ignorance, and from purity to corruption, was gradual, so that we cannot fairly apply a general character of so deep a die to the Christian Church, before the sixth century ; but at the latter part of this and beginning of the seventh, the measure of this iniquity came to its full.

And at this time history records a dreadful invasion of the Christian world by numerous armies assailing it at the same time by corrupt blasphemous doctrines, and by the terror of their arms ; and with such amazing success, as to cut off from the hope and comfort of Christianity, and from the communion of the Church, so large a body of Christians, as may fairly be accounted one third part of the whole, yet leaving the remaining parts of the Christian Church idolatrous, impure, and unrepentant.

Under this description it will be easy to recognise the invasion of the Mahometan Saracens, whose numerous armies, famous for their cavalry, beginning their destructive progress early in the seventh century, soon subdued, not only to their arms, but also to their corrupt and blasphemous religion, a great part of Christendom, thus fulfilling the prediction in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th verses. All historians are agreed in describing a dreadful corruption and idolatry of the Church at the time of the Saracene irruption ; and to that circumstance, and to the unchristian divisions and animosities then prevailing, they ascribe principally the success of Mahomet and his followers ; at the same time accounting this calamity a punishment from heaven, which the professed Christians had justly deserved.

And that the Christian countries, which remained unsubdued by the Saracene arms and doctrines, re-

mained also such as they were before, and such as they are described in the vision, superstitious, idolatrous, and immoral, and unrepentant, is as clearly established in the history of those times.

But as no period is fixed in this prophecy, as in that of the fifth trumpet, for the continuance of this woe, there seems no occasion to confine the fulfilment of it, in all its parts and effects, to the first Mahometan conquests by the Saracens; but it may be understood to comprehend every great assault, by which the Mahometan powers, of whatever tribe and origin, have successfully invaded and overturned the Christian worship and profession. And it is singularly remarkable, that as the dominions of the Mahometan powers were enlarged, from time to time, by these repeated irruptions, so the Christian powers continued to extend their limits and influence in nearly the same proportion, gaining in the western parts of the globe what they lost in the east, and preserving somewhat of the same balance which was set forth at first by this divine prophecy.

The labours of learned men, more particularly of Joseph Mede and Vitranga, who have shown that this vision may be fitly applied to the irruptions of particular Mahometan nations, may be profitably consulted by the student. But when these are perused, it may be useful also to attend to the following suggestion: that the symbols of this vision, although more strictly applicable to the first grand irruption by Mahomet and his Saracens, may not unfitly be so applied as to comprehend them all.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See notes in the former work to chap. ix. 13—21.

## PART III.

## SECTION VI.

*The little Book.*

## CHAP. X.

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud : and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire :

2 And he had in his hand a little book open : and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth : and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write : and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer :

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up ; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up ; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey : and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophecy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

IN the 13th verse of the 8th chapter, three grand woes, three distinct periods of successful attack upon

the Church by the antichristian powers, are announced. The first of these takes place immediately, and in chap. ix. 12, is said to be *past*, and the second follows: but this, though it begins, like the first, with an hostile invasion, does not end in like manner. No period (as in the first woe, of one hundred and fifty years) is assigned for its continuance; and when the description of the invasion is finished, no similar notice is given that the woe is ended. On the contrary, it seems to continue till the seventh trumpet sounds (chap. xi. 14,) when it is declared to be *past*. The whole prophecy had now begun to appear as drawing to its close, for the seventh and last trumpet was expected. But a new and enlarging scene opens under the remains of this sixth trumpet, and before the end of the second woe. The famous period of forty-two months, or 1260 days, is here presented to view; the usurped dominion of the Mahometans continues with it. But there is another antichristian usurpation, belonging to the same period, which is now to be prefigured.

Ver. 1. *And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.*] This appearance of an angel from heaven was pronounced by Sir William Jones to equal in sublimity any description to be found in the inspired writers, and to be far superior to any thing of the kind produced by human composition.

The surpassing splendour of this mighty angel, his coming in the clouds of heaven, the heavenly iris or bow surrounding his head, his tread extending over earth and sea, have given him, in the opinion of many commentators, a *divine* character, an origin more than angelic; and some of the foreign commen-



tators, when they found that they could not consistently pronounce him the second person in the Trinity, have hesitated whether they should not account him the third. But it is to be considered, that he is expressly denominated *an angel*, "*another angel*," a being of the same order and description as the *other* heavenly messengers employed in these visions under the name of *angels*. The Son of God is already upon the scene in his emblem of the Lamb of God, and occupying his seat on the great Father's throne, and there he continues, even to the fourteenth chapter, and before the throne is stationed the representation of the Holy Spirit, (ch. iv. 5.) But such *another angel* had been seen to officiate in the presence of the Lamb, (ch. vii. 2, and again viii. 3,) yet of less glorious appearance. This then will appear to be the same kind of divine messenger, but coming with a more dignified commission,—to convey to the Church of Christ, through the apostle St. John, prophetic information of the highest import.

Ver. 2. *And he had in his hand a little book open.*] For the purpose above described he holds in his hand "*a LITTLE BOOK*," a little, not in respect of its contents, which are of the greatest importance, but with a view to the object for which it was immediately designed—to be eaten and digested spiritually by the prophet. The book is open, unsealed; by our Lord's merits it had become so, (see ch. v. 9.) It was probably a part of the larger sealed book which was opened by the Lamb, for it comes under the seals which are not yet emptied of their contents. It may also be the same in part with the prophecies of Daniel, (ch. xii. 4, 9,) which were sealed in his time for a distant period; a period

which will be seen to have relation to the times of these apocalyptic visions now coming into view.

*And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.*] In the scene now before St. John, the heaven, containing God's throne and altar, and his surrounding ministers, are *above*; and the earth beneath, not suspended in an orbicular form, but extended as a plain, and containing the divisions, before marked, of land, sea, and rivers. The angel descends from heaven, and takes his station on the earth, placing one of his gigantic feet on the sea, the other on the land. The eastern nations, expressed by the division of the *land*, had been hitherto the principal scene of action under this trumpet. The angel's placing one foot on the sea, and that his principal or *right* foot, seems to intimate that the western nations, or Gentiles, are to be a principal object of the remaining prophecy under this trumpet. And this accords with the commission given to St. John in verse 11, he is "to prophesy before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

Ver. 4. *And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.*] The whole prophecy is delivered under *seven* seals, *seven* trumpets, *seven* vials. In this passage a particular prophecy, or, it may be, seven distinct prophecies are uttered by seven voices, loud as thunder, awful and terrible as the lion-like voice of the angel who introduces them. But whatsoever intelligence may have been received by the prophet from this divine communication, he is forbidden to publish it. Thus events of great import, which were to happen under this seal and trumpet, are not revealed in this pro-

phetical book. Some of the commentators have pretended to point out the history in which these unpublished predictions have been fulfilled. "But," says Bishop Newton, "as we know not the subjects of the seven thunders, so neither can we know the reasons for suppressing them." Suppressed they are by divine wisdom; and all that we can fairly collect from the transaction is this, that there are great events in history, and probably relating to the Christian Church, which are not made the subject of open prophecy.

Ver. 5. *Lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware, &c.*] The angel takes a solemn oath, in a form of scriptural antiquity, (Gen. xiv. 22; Deut. xxxii. 40; Ezek. xx. 5.) This mode of swearing has descended even unto our own times and nation, being still used in Scotland, and there allowed by act of parliament to those dissenters who are styled *Seceders*, (Paley's Moral Philosophy.) The solemn league and covenant, in the time of Charles the First, was taken in this scriptural form.

Ver. 6 and 7. *And sware . . . . that there should be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*] There is considerable difficulty in this passage, as it stands in the original language. The student, who wishes to be ably conducted through it, will do well to read Vitringa's learned observations, (in locum,) and to add to these the remarks of an able scholar, who has successfully studied the use of the Greek article, as applied by the writers of the New Testament, (Dr. Middleton, late bishop of Calcutta,) who authorises us to translate the words *ετελεσθη το*

μυστηριον του Θεου, *the mystery of God* SHALL be finished. Many instances occur also in the Septuagint of the use of this tense, as applicable to future time. This supports the translation offered with great authority, for the Greek of the Septuagint is the language of the New Testament.

These remarks tend to support those of the commentators, who, though they could not but see difficulty in the first clause of the angel's oath, *χρονος ουκ επι εσται*, yet seem clearly to have collected from the following part of it, that it refers upon the whole to that happy *time*, promised by divine prophecy, when the antichristian factions being subdued, the blessings of pure and peaceful religion shall abound. That period will occur under the seventh and last trumpet; for then the warfare predicted is concluded by the final victory and ascendancy of the Christian cause. In the visions succeeding to that now before us, the prevalence of the beast and his false prophet are foretold. This consolation therefore is now afforded us, before we enter upon that lamentable scene.

Ver. 8—11. *And the voice which I heard, &c. &c.*] In this passage St. John receives commission, *as a prophet to the Christian Church*, in a form nearly resembling that by which, under the Old Testament, Ezekiel was commissioned as a prophet to the house of Israel, (Ezek. ii. and iii.) The roll, or book, (for they are the same,) upon which the prophecy is written, is delivered to each prophet with a command that he should eat it; to eat it in a figurative sense, so that the contents, the prophetic denunciations, shall be completely possessed by him internally, that he may become "the living oracle of God."

Both these prophecies contained *woe*, and were ungrateful to both prophets, though at their first re-

ception they had seemed pleasant to the mouth. The gratification of curiosity is pleasant, the appointment to a prophetic character is honourable ; but to read in the womb of futurity grievous denunciations against our country and church, must bitterly afflict an honest and benevolent mind.

But why is this *new* commission to the prophet ? He was sent originally *to the seven Churches in Asia* : Wherefore this new designation ? “ *Thou must prophesy AGAIN before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings?*” In answer to this it may be observed, that prior to the conquests of the Mahometan invaders, the seven Churches were situated near the centre of the Christian world. From that time they were no longer central in any sense : they lost their consequence, “ repented not of their idolatry and wickedness,” and in succeeding irruptions they fell a prey to the victorious enemy. “ Their candlestick, or lamp-bearer, was removed,” according to the threatening of their Lord, (ch. ii. 5.) But as the Christian religion receded in the east, before the arms and doctrines of the Mahometans, it spread and enlarged in the west. A new scene and a new audience have now their commencement. The Gentile nations (the sea on which the angel places his principal foot) come into view ; those ten kingdoms, into which the remains of the Roman empire were divided, are a principal part.

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Upon the vision exhibited in this tenth chapter, the difference of interpretation, by the principal commentators, is not such as to require much remark. Whether the little book be the same as that opened by the Lamb, or a part of it, or a codicil added to it, is not very material to the explanation of its contents. All are agreed that it contains the



matter of the prophecy then coming forward, and by the complete possession of which St. John became the inspired and communicating prophet of that important period, already announced by the prophet Daniel in the same solemn manner as by the oath of the angel, to continue “a time, times, and an half,” (Dan. xii. 7;) and this is the subject of a large remaining portion of the Apocalypse. It is likewise very generally accorded, that the Church of Christ, and more especially the great western branch of it, is the main object of this part of the prophecy; and, as the development of it discloses a series of its sufferings under the usurpation and abuses of the antichristian ministers of Satan; so a consolatory assurance, by the oath of a divine messenger, precedes the symbolical narrative of these evil days. The Church is assured, that though these afflictions must have their allotted period, their existence will altogether cease with the blast of the seventh trumpet. It is now also generally allowed, that the prophecies of the little book belong in a great measure to the sixth trumpet, which had been otherwise considered by Mede. The reader may see the opinion of this ingenious theorist candidly examined, and ably refuted, by Vitringa (in locum.)

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### PART III.

#### SECTION VII.

##### *The measuring of the Temple, and the Witnesses.*

CHAP. xi. ver. 1—14.

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod : and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

11 And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

Ver. 1, 2. *And there was given me a reed,*<sup>1</sup> &c.] St. John now enters upon the prophetic office, as-

<sup>1</sup> It may be proper to observe, that the words "*And the angel stood,*" Gr. *καὶ ὁ Ἀγγελος εἰστηκε*, are rejected from the text by the best authorities, as not to be found in the most authentic manu-

signed to him in the last chapter. A measuring rod is placed in his hands, and the temple of God, the altar, and they who worship therein, are declared to be the objects of his mensuration.

The temple of God, after the coming of the Messiah and the rejection of the Jews, is the Christian Church, (1 Cor. iii. 16 ; 2 Cor. vi. 16 ; 1 Tim. iii. 15 ; Epist. to Heb. passim.) The altar represents the worship therein duly performed ; and, by those who dwell therein, we must understand the true and pure worshippers. And by comparing Ezek. xl. 3, 4, and Zech. ii. 1—5, with this passage, we may deduce, that by such appointed mensuration, the places measured are appropriated to the worship of God.

In this passage before us, no report is made of the number of worshippers, of those who were admitted to the interior courts and the altar ; but in the times, which are generally supposed to be prefigured in this prophecy, few there were, very few, who “ worshipped in spirit and in truth.” But the outer court of the temple is particularly mentioned, and the divine command is, that it shall not be measured—*εκβαλε εξω*, “ cast it out, measure it not.” The worshippers there are not admitted to the purer light of the divine presence. These are “ the people and nations and tongues and kings,” the Gentiles, before whom St. John was appointed specially to prophesy. They are, however, to possess and occupy the exterior court. Christian they are by name and profession, but not admitted to that nearer commu-

scripts. This interpolation seems to have taken place, with a view to supply a nominative case to the participle *λεγων*, but it is not wanted. We easily refer it, either to “ the mighty angel” who gave to St. John the little book, or to “ the voice from heaven,” by which he had been called and directed in the last chapter.

nication with the Deity, which imparts the purer knowledge and worship. But though excluded from the interior of the temple and its sanctuaries, they are to possess “the holy city.” The holy city is that which contains the temple. Such was Jerusalem, (Matt. v. 35; xxvii. 53;) and after the rejection and destruction of this holy city, such was, and is, the Christian Church, which in its renovated state is denominated “the New Jerusalem,” (Gal. iv. 25, 26; Rev. iii. 12; xxi. 2, 10.)

This holy city, the Christian Church, they are to tread forty and two months. The received translation says, “tread under foot;” and many of the commentators have therefore understood it to signify, that *they shall trample upon, and tyrannize over the Church of Christ*. This sense would be justly inferred, if the word in the Greek had been καταπατησουσι, but it is simply πατησουσι. And the verb πατειω without a preposition prefixed, or following, signifies simply to tread or to go; and, in the Greek Septuagint, πατειν την αυλην μου, is to tread and worship in the courts of the Lord’s temple. (Compare Isa. i. 12, and xxv. 10, with Psa. lxxv. 4) and, conformably to this meaning, we learn from history, that the treading of the Gentiles in the Christian Church, though marked with ignorance and superstition, has not been vindictive or contemptuous.

The time appointed for the continued occupation of the outer court by the Gentiles is forty-two months. It is the very same period in length of duration as the twelve hundred and sixty days mentioned in the following verse; for it has been fully proved by the learned, that the month of the Hebrews, and of other nations in the east, contained regularly thirty days, which, multiplied by forty-two, produces 1260; and since a day, in prophetic language, signifies a year, the whole period is

1260 years. (See note, ch. ii. 10; and consult Scalliger, Sir John Marsham, Bishop Lloyd, Strauchius, Marshall, &c.)

And these two periods will be found, and are generally allowed to coincide, at least in point of duration, with a third period, which occurs in ch. xii. 14, and also in Dan. vii. 25, viz. *a time and times and half a time*. For a *time* being used to signify *a year*, (Dan. iv. 16;) this period is three years and an half, and each year containing three hundred and sixty days, the whole is found to amount to 1260 years.

Ver. 3, 4.] The period already described is assigned here also to be that of *the two witnesses of God*, who in verse 10 are likewise called his *prophets*. These are to execute their appointed office in mournful, funereal garb; for such is sackcloth in scripture, (2 Sam. iii. 31; Ps. xxx. 11; 1 Kings xxi. 27; Rev. vi. 12.) They are further described as the two candlesticks or “lamp-bearers, which are standing before the God of the earth.” The olive was a sacred plant growing in the temple, and the same figurative resemblance had been before applied to divine prophets, who are described as two olive-trees standing by the altar, and spontaneously producing the golden (pure) oil; and in the divine interpretation of these symbols they are said to be “the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth,” (Zech. iv. 14.) These are commonly understood to signify Zorobabel and Joshua, the lights and ornaments of the ancient Church when rising from the Babylonish captivity. But to point out more completely the office of the witnesses so represented, they are also said to be “the two candlesticks” or lamp-bearers, occupying the same holy place. But the mystical meaning of the word



lamp-bearer (Gr. *λυχνία*) we have already learned from infallible authority, (ch. i. 12.) The Churches of Christ are so denominated by Christ himself: they, in their primitive purity, bore aloft the Christian light, visible and instructive to the darkened world.

But at the time apparently pointed out by this prophecy, the Churches then denominated Christian were become corrupt and idolatrous, and thus had forfeited this their distinguishing privilege. And by whom then was it possessed? Not by the Gentile Churches; for they, by this very prophecy, were excluded from the inner temple, where the lamp-bearers were stationed. The office therefore of bearing aloft the true Christian light, is committed to the two witnesses. To them during the period of their prophecy we are to look for the pure light of the Gospel.

Ver. 5, 6.] These witnesses or prophets, are to be endued with that power of the ancient prophets which we read thus expressed in holy writ: "I will make my word in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them," (Jer. v. 14; compare also Isa. x. 17, &c. xi. 4.; Jer. i. 9, 10; Hos. vi. 5; 2 Thess. ii. 8.) They are to prophesy in the power and spirit of Moses, who turned the waters into blood; and of Elijah, at whose bidding the fertilizing fall of rain was miraculously withholden, (Exod. vii. 20; James v. 17; 1 Kings xvi. 1.)

Ver. 7, 8.] But at the time appointed for the period of their ministry, the wild beast, who is to ascend from the bottomless deep, who in ch. xiii. is more particularly described, shall make war upon them, and overcome and slay them; and shall prosecute his victory with such barbarous ferocity, as

not to permit to their remains the privilege of interment. Their bodies, like those of the massacred Jews under Sennacherib, are to be exposed in the public place or forum of the great city, of that idolatrous, corrupt community, of which Sodom, and Egypt, and Jerusalem in its most degenerate days, stained with the blood of the holy Jesus, were expressive types.

Ver. 9, 10.] And the persons who belong to this great and wicked community, consisting of “many people and kindreds, tongues and nations” (see ch. x. 11.) shall behold their dead bodies three days and an half, and rejoice over them as upon a formidable enemy destroyed.

Ver. 11, 12.] But, after the three days and an half, a spirit of life from God enters into them; to the astonishment and dread of the beholders, they live again, and, at the call of an heavenly voice, are seen by their enemies ascending to heaven in a cloud, as their Lord Jesus, and their prototype Elijah had done before them.

In attempting the application of this prophecy to events in history, we are not to expect a *literal* accomplishment; for, in the first place, that would be contrary to the mode of interpretation to which we are directed by the highest authority, by our Lord himself, and by the angels employed in his revelation, who, in explaining *the* “mystery” of the stars, the lamp-bearers, the wild beast, his head, his horns, teach us to look for a hidden and allegorical meaning. (Ch. i. 2; xvii.)

Secondly, such an explication becomes *necessary in this particular prophecy*. For, the dead bodies are represented as lying “in the streets of the great city, which is called *spiritually* Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem, where also their Lord was crucified.”

Thus it is evident, that in a *spiritual* sense only, we are to understand the words Sodom, Egypt and Jerusalem; they are used metaphorically. And farther, the great city which is called Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem, cannot be *all* of them, and therefore must be interpreted to signify some great society or body of men, which is *like them all*; resembling them all in the peculiar wickedness of each, as well as in rebellion against the most high God; the common character of them all. As Jerusalem in its degenerate days, is by the prophet called Sodom and Gomorrah, (Isa. i. 9, 10.) so the great city, in which the witnesses prophesy and suffer, is called after the name of all the cities mentioned, because it resembles all.

Thirdly, the time of the accomplishment of this prophecy seems, upon the whole, to be pretty well ascertained; for although doubts must arise concerning the exact commencement, and consequently the close of its period; yet a main part of it is plainly seen to occupy many centuries of the most degenerate and idolatrous times of the Christian church; when the Gentile world, the European nations, professed the Christian religion, but not in its purity; a period of twelve hundred and sixty years, contemporary with the reign of the wild beast, the much greater part of which seems now to be past. Yet, during this period, we cannot collect from history that any such literal accomplishment has taken place.

Nor, fourthly, ought we to expect such literal accomplishment; because, in other instances, the acknowledged types under the Old Testament, have not been fulfilled literally in their antitypes under the gospel. John the Baptist is said to come "in the spirit and power of Elias," nay, to be that very prophet, (Luke i. 17; Matth. xi. 4; Mark ix. 13); yet, conformably to the spirit of meekness, which

is peculiar to the gospel, he performed no avenging miracles; he called down no literal fire from heaven to destroy his opposers. He knew, better than those disciples who intreated their Master for this fire, (Luke ix. 54—57,) “what manner of spirit he was of.” He knew that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down strong holds.” He poured down fire on them by the words of his mouth. (2 Cor. x. 4; Matth. iii. 7—12.)

Thus, in a spiritual sense, the prophecy may be accomplished in the witnesses, without (1.) literal fire; (2.) without the hindrance of literal rain; or (3.) the conversion of the waters literally into blood. The first may be deemed essentially fulfilled, if the enemies of the witnesses, and of their pure religion, are in many instances dismayed, confounded, frustrated, and subdued by the heavenly words of their mouth. The second, if the rain from heaven which, spiritually interpreted, is the blessing from heaven upon the growth of true religion generally in the world,<sup>1</sup> is suspended during their prophecy. The third, if in the contest, the enemies of the witnesses, instead of the peaceful enjoyment expected to accrue from their apparent destruction, behold their tenets, and the open profession of them revive with power irresistible.

Add to this, that the *death* of the witnesses is also to be taken in a spiritual sense. Such an acceptance of it agrees best with *the succession* of witnesses, which, as before observed, must necessarily take place in so long a duration of time. They do not all die, and rise again from the dead; but if their religion, and the power thereof, be extinguished for a time, and then raised again unexpectedly, and by

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 9; lxxii. 6; Isa. lv. 10; Hos. vi. 1; Ezek. xxxiv. 26; Heb. vi. 7.



heavenly agency and power, the prophecy may appear to be fulfilled.

The prophets Moses and Elijah, typify in their history, that of the two witnesses. These two prophets fled to the wilderness, from the presence of two idolatrous kings. In a time of general depravity, they preserved, and at length miraculously restored the light and prevalence of true religion. They seem both of them, in their own persons, either exempt from death, or to have been raised immediately from its dominion; for they both appeared at the transfiguration of our Lord, types of a glorious resurrection. Whatever in this chapter is attributed to the witnesses, may be found prefigured in one or other, or both these prophets. But that which the prophets did in their bodies literally, the witnesses perform only in a spiritual sense; that sense which is peculiar to the gospel of the New Testament, when compared with its prototypes in the Old. We are then to look beyond the literal sense; and fixing our attention on the period of history to which we seem directed, we cannot fail to remark a long succession of ages, commencing with the times when the western Gentiles flowed into the Church, and possessed the outer courts of the temple; when, on their ignorance and superstition a corrupt and ambitious clergy began to raise the papal hierarchy, substituting Pagan ceremonies, and, unauthorised observances in the room of primitive religion.

These in history are called *the middle ages*; intervening between the bright period of ancient literature, and the restoration of learning in the fourteenth century; between the days of primitive Christianity, and the return of it at the Reformation. They are marked in ecclesiastical history by ignorance, superstition, corrupt morals, and by papal usurpation.



But the progress of these foes to true religion, and to the happiness of mankind, was opposed and retarded by the professors of a purer faith. "God did not leave himself without *a witness*." There arose in many parts of the great Christian republic, and at various periods, professors and preachers of a purer religion; of a religion formed upon the promises and precepts revealed in that sacred book, which it was the constant endeavour of the ecclesiastical usurpers to keep out of sight.

A successive train of these, though thinly scattered, was seen, in defiance of the papal thunder, to devoutly hold up to admiring Christians the light of the gospel, and the true worship of the temple. Though beset with difficulties and dangers, from the powers civil and ecclesiastical united to suppress them, they stood their ground with a confidence and energy that could arise only from such a cause, the cause of truth, cherished and supported by the spirit and power of God. If they suffered, their enemies suffered also, were frequently discomfited and repulsed, and obtained at last a dear-bought and only temporary victory.

Of the witnesses in the early part of this history, we have received but imperfect accounts; and these are come down to us in a very suspicious form, being transmitted to us chiefly in the writings of their adversaries. We may admit, therefore, what is thus said in their praise, while in other respects, we must be allowed to doubt.

It appears probable, that the Valdenses, so early as in the seventh century, had retreated to the valleys of Piedmont, there to profess and enjoy a purer religion than was permitted to them elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> In the eighth and ninth centuries, the progress of

<sup>1</sup> Mosheim's Hist. cent. vii. part ii. ch. ii. sect. 2; cent. xii. part ii. ch. v. sect. 2. note; and the authorities referred to.

Popery was vigorously opposed; and private masses, and pilgrimages, and the worship of images, and other superstitions, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, then first broached, were clearly shown, by many learned writers, to be contrary to the truth of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> From the time of Pope Gregory VII. in the eleventh century, we see the light of truth more frequently beaming forth, and with increasing lustre. In the twelfth century, it was widely diffused by Peter Waldo and his followers. In the thirteenth century, the inquisition was established to extinguish it,<sup>2</sup> and crusades were levied against those who received it. In the fourteenth century, our Wickliffe caught the holy light, and communicated it to many proselytes. In the succeeding century, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, died martyrs to the cause; and it shone forth among their numerous disciples, in many parts of Europe, until the inquisition, with fire and faggot, and by obstinate perseverance, seemed at length to have obtained the object of so much murderous persecution, the extinction of a pure faith and practice; so that at the commencement of the next century, the Roman pontiff appeared to enjoy his usurpation in tranquil security.

But suddenly, to the utter astonishment and confusion of the papal world, they beheld this *heresy* (as they termed it,) revive,—“a spirit of life from God enters into it,—it stands upon its feet;” it becomes immortal, and leads the way to heaven.

Thus, the revival of pure religion “in spirit and in truth,” placed by the Reformation beyond the power

<sup>1</sup> Usserius de Christianæ Ecclesiæ successione et statu. Allix's remarks on the ancient churches of the Albigenses, and of Piedmont. Bishop Newton's Dissertations on Prophecy, vol. iii. pp. 150—160. octavo edit.

<sup>2</sup> Mosheim, cent. xiii. part ii. ch. v.

of its enemies, seems to be expressed by the sufferings and resurrection of the witnesses. Thus, in more early times, our Lord's religion had appeared extinct and buried with him; but, after three days, with him it rose again,—was rekindled in the faint and sunken hearts of his disciples; by whose preaching it was diffused rapidly among the nations, imparting to them the pure knowledge of the one true God, and of an heavenly Redeemer. As during the long reign of darkness and corruption preceding the Reformation, the light of genuine religion was seen frequently to beam through the prevailing mists of superstition at intervals, and for a short time only; so many periods are pointed out by commentators, when this true light, thus overclouded, broke out again at the end precisely of three years and an half, answering prophetically to the three days and half foretold in this chapter.<sup>1</sup> These seem to be so many partial and particular resurrections of pure religion,

<sup>1</sup> See them collected by Bishop Newton, *Dissert. on the Prophecies*, vol. iii. 140—146; octavo edition.

The commentators in the reformed churches are in the main agreed, as to the general interpretation of this prophecy in a mystical or spiritual sense. They all look to the same times of fulfilment, to the same conflict, to the progress of the Reformation, opposed by the papal hierarchy; but not without some view in favour of their own particular age, nation, or sphere of action. Vitringa has shown, that in several instances this has been done by them successfully: so that these partial completions of the prediction have seemed to some commentators to stand as types, as it were of some grander and more universal fulfilment. The Reformation opened by Luther, has been accounted one of these. But as no one is authorised to affirm, that the whole period of twelve hundred and sixty years is already elapsed, so to future time only can we look with safety for the exposition of a prophecy whose complete history may yet remain to be unfolded.

The partial fulfilments to which we allude, may be seen in Vitringa's able and learned exposition of this prophecy, and abstracted in the work of Bishop Newton; and the student may see the progress of the Reformation through these its stages, briefly and ably delineated by Fraser in his *Key to the prophecies*.

again to be buried and lost for a time. Such a dark interval preceded the Reformation, which was again set on foot by the preaching of Luther. "The rulers of the darkness of this world," (Eph. vi. 12.) had then, to all human appearance, extinguished the light of evangelical truth. But while they were celebrating their triumph, the holy light rekindles; it rises, as it were, from the dead. By Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Zuinglius, and their followers; the religion of the Bible, the gospel of Christ, are reproduced in the Christian world; are perpetuated by the then newly-invented art of printing; and again become the rule of worship and of duty, the sure guides to heaven.

Ver. 13.] An earthquake prefigures earthly commotions; without which the events announced under this part of the sixth trumpet could not be expected to take place. The tenth part of the city falls. This apparently is *the great city*, described in verse the 8th as corrupt, after the abominations of Sodom, of Egypt, of Jerusalem, in her most degenerate days, containing at the same time the Gentiles, (see ver. 2 and 9,) who tread the exterior courts, but are not admitted into the interior of the Lord's house or temple.

This description seems to comprise the whole visible community of the Christian Church, during the prophecy of the witnesses, and exclusive of them. A tenth, that is a very conspicuous part of it, is seen to fall at this time. This city undergoes another subsequent earthquake, (ch. xvi. 19.) when it is represented as composed of many cities of the Gentiles, or nations which fall.

In the present earthquake, there were slain, names of men, (so the translation is rightly given in the margin,) seven thousand, and the result is, that



“ the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

This earthquake happens at the time when the witnesses finish, or are finishing their testimony. That is, towards the close of the twelve hundred and sixty years, assigned to them in verse the second. The events therefore prefigured by it, are probably yet to come, and cannot be safely ascertained before history shall show them forth conformable to the prediction.

However, in the annals of the Reformation already obtained, commentators have pointed out events, which, in the spiritual sense in which this prophecy has been hitherto explained, seem to amount nearly to fulfilment. Thus, in the sixteenth century, the Reformation re-attempted, by Luther and his followers, occasioned the most violent commotions; and the great city or community professing itself Christian, was vehemently shaken by wars and persecutions; and a great part of it renounced their obedience to the Roman pontiff. But, a considerable number of the men, (Christian, in name and profession,) fell from the life which is in Christ. The Christian liberty, which they were entitled to, (Gal. v. 1.) and had obtained, produced in some licentiousness and fanaticism, as in the anabaptists of Munster; in others infidelity and atheism. But to the Christian world in general, the Reformation of the sixteenth century was in every sense most beneficial. Many nations withdrawing themselves entirely from the tyranny and corruptions of the Roman church, modelled their religion by the word of God, and the practice of primitive Christianity. And even they, who were compelled to adhere to the papal communion, incited by the example of Protestants, began to cultivate, if not in their formularies, yet in their lives and practice, a less impure and corrupt



religion. Some nations, acknowledging the papal name, have been enabled to shake off a considerable part of the papal yoke ; to renounce the authority of the court of Rome in their civil, and (as in the Gallican church,) some of their religious concerns ; and a prospect is thus opened of their entire deliverance from this audacious usurpation.

Ver. 14.] The second woe appears, from this passage and its context, to be under the sixth trumpet, and included in the period of twelve hundred and sixty years, which seems to contain the greater part of the Mahometan and Papal times. As to the third woe, or temporary depression of Christianity, I have in another place expressed an apprehension that it is yet to come ; and we must withhold our judgment concerning prophecies yet unfulfilled.

## PART IV.

## SECTION I.

*The sounding of the Seventh Trumpet.*

CHAP. xi. ver. 15 to the end.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

16 And the four-and-twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Ver. 15.] The sound of the seventh trumpet was become an object of expectation. It was the last trumpet, the sabbatical one, which, after a long period of warfare, should bring rest and peace to the church. The angel had solemnly declared, that “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, the mystery of God should be finished.” Immediately, therefore, as this sound is heard, heavenly voices hail the happy time, and announce the triumphant reign of

God, and of his anointed. The twenty-four elders join the heavenly chorus, anticipating the joyful event, even before it is disclosed in prophetic vision. Thus the scene is suddenly removed from earth to heaven ; where the same apparatus, and the same heavenly ministers appear, surrounding the throne of God, as in the fourth chapter.

Ver. 18.] The *wrath of the nations*, must remind us of the opening of that august prophecy relating to Christ's kingdom, in the 2d Psalm,—“ why do the nations so furiously rage, &c.” and of similar expressions in the 110th Psalm.

The received translation expresses that the dead are to be judged at this time : but more than this seems to be intended in the original : for before the great day of final retribution, when the *literally* dead shall be raised from their graves for judgment, (as in ch. xxii. 12.) another kind of judgment is to be expected,—that by which the inequalities in the distribution of justice, shall be rectified *under the reign of Christ's religion upon earth*. Κρισιν τοις εθνεσι επαγγελει, “ he shall utter *judgment* to the nations,” was the prophetic designation of our Lord, (Matth. xii. 18.) “ All judgment was committed to him by the Father,” (John v. 22.) and his right to exercise it took place from his crucifixion (John xii. 31.) ; but this judgment was suspended for a time, Ἡ κρισις αὐτου ηρθη, (Acts viii. 33.) and was not to be exercised in plenitude of power, till the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. (Luke xxi. 24.) And this judgment, though not perfected in all its parts before the great and last day, (which is also comprehended under this seventh and last trumpet,) yet is first to be partially displayed in the destruction of the corrupt worldly powers, and the restoration of a purer religion and morality.

“ The time of the dead,” may likewise signify

(in that metaphorical sense in which the word *death*, &c. is frequently used,) the time when pure religion, dead and buried with the witnesses, shall with them revive and flourish. But no final and certain opinion can be passed on prophecy, before the event shall direct the interpretation.

Ver. 19.] “The ark of the covenant,”—the sacred coffer so called, because it contained the tables of the covenant into which God had deigned to enter with the ancient church,—was deposited in the tabernacle called “the holiest of all.” (Heb. ix. 1—5.) This interior part of the temple, accessible under the law to none but the high priest, is now opened, and the ark is exhibited to view. Jesus Christ, the only High Priest and Mediator of the new covenant,—who had now deposited here his new covenant of mercy, “the everlasting gospel,”—who had broken down the partition which excluded the Gentiles from its benefits,—who alone could enter the holy of holies, grants the exhibition. As the walls of idolatrous Jericho fell before the ark of the old covenant, so will the corrupt Babylon before the new one: but that which seems more immediately to be signified under this exhibition, is the restoration of the Christian religion in its purity. To the Gentiles, who, the greater part of them, had not yet known this religion in its purity, a view of the ark of the covenant is afforded from the æra of the Reformation.

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Vitringa has taken a concise and able view of those interpretations of this prophecy, which have referred the fulfilment of it either to the great and last day of judgment, or to those times preceding our own, when religion, after having been long de-

pressed and overclouded, has shone forth again with some heavenly lustre. He has clearly shown the errors of these interpreters, and among them those of Bishop Bossuet and the Romanists; and that the fulfilment is only to be expected in times yet to come in this present world, when the reign of Christ's pure religion shall be extended far beyond any limits that have hitherto contained it, "when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. ii. 14.)

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## PART IV.

### SECTION II.

#### *The Woman and the Dragon.*

##### CHAP. xii.

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.



9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12 Therefore, rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea; for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 1. *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, &c.*] The word *σημειον*, should be translated a *sign or symbol*; for it is used here to signify, not only what is simply *wonderful*, but particularly so, as expressive of a *figurative resemblance*; (so, in Matth. xii. 38; xvi. 1—4; Rom. iv. 11.) We have been instructed in this manner, under such resemblances, throughout these prophecies. The sounding of the seventh trumpet has now prepared us to expect a figurative exhibition of that great conflict and victory, by which the Christian Church will at length be placed in security from her enemies. To describe this *in all its parts*, and to enable us to understand the conflict, by ascertaining

the combatants, the holy Spirit begins the figurative history from the earliest times of the Church; and past events are represented in the same allegory, which is continued to foretell those which are to come.

A *woman*, in this figurative language, is used to signify a city, a nation, a state, or body politic.<sup>1</sup> This method of representing nations and cities under the symbol of women, was copied from the eastern by the western world. Rome has long been known under this figurative description. And we have Britannia, a woman. Among the Roman coins is one of the Emperor Vespasian, on the reverse of which is a captive woman, hanging her mournful head, and the inscription is *Judæa*. She is there depicted, as by the master-hand, in Lam. i. 1—4; and in the 137th Psalm, where the daughter of Babylon, and the captive daughter of Jerusalem, are beautifully contrasted. But the woman, the city now represented, is of *heavenly* origin, “whose builder and maker is God;” of which “Christ is the corner-stone, *the new, the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all.*” (Matth. xvi. 18; Gal. iv. 26, 27; 1 Cor. iii. 9, &c.; 2 Cor. v. 1—3, vi. 16; Eph. ii. 19—22, iv. 12, 16; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 3, 7, 10; Heb. iii. 6, xi. 10, xii. 22; Rev. iii. 12, xxi. 2.) These quotations prove beyond doubt, that she is *the Church of Christ*, of pure heavenly origin, and placed upon the earth in her infant form, when it pleased God to bless with religion our first parents; and, when they were expelled from Paradise, to support their hopes, and those of their posterity, by the promise of a Redeemer, the offspring of the woman, who should “bruise the serpent’s head.” The imagery which in this apocalyptic vision is seen to decorate her, is grand and sublime. No earthly material is employed to clothe or adorn her; she is

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlv. 12; cxxxvii. 8; 2 Kings xix. 21.

arrayed in pure and heavenly light.<sup>1</sup> And thus splendid she will again appear, when she has regained her native purity, and is freed from the assaults of her enemies, and the corruptions of a sinful world. (Rev. xxi.)

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There is but little difference of opinion upon the explanation of this part of the prophecy: almost all the commentators agree, that the woman represents the Church of Christ. Methodius, who wrote about the year 290, thus applies it.<sup>2</sup>

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Ver. 2. *And she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*] Such was the situation of the Church from the time of Adam, “the first man,” to whom the seed was promised,—to that of Christ, “the second man,” the promised “seed, the Lord from heaven.” The scriptural writers express, under the same imagery, the earnest and unsatisfied desire of the ancient Church, to possess this promised blessing. (Mich. v. 2, 3; Rom. viii. 22.)

Ver. 3, 4, 5. *And there appeared another wonder (or sign) in heaven; and behold a great red (πυρρος, fire-coloured) dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven*

<sup>1</sup> See Psalm civ. 2; where the Almighty is poetically represented as “clothing himself with light, as it were with a garment.”

<sup>2</sup> Vitringa observes, that Launæus, Cocceius, and other foreign interpreters, suppose her to be the church of the Old Testament: this interpretation he combats, and endeavours to show that it is that of the New Testament which she represents. But according to the most judicious divines, these form but *one* church, one and the same, of which Christ was the head from the beginning, when he was declared the successful supporter of the Church against her inveterate enemy.

*crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman, which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up to God and to his throne.]* To this description of the fire-coloured dragon, if we add the view afforded of him in the ninth verse of this chapter, (where he is said to be “that old, or ancient serpent,<sup>1</sup> who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world,”) we cannot entertain a doubt of his identity.<sup>2</sup> The Devil (*Διαβολος*) is the Greek name, as Satan is the Hebrew one, of that arch-enemy of true religion and of mankind, who, under the form of a *serpent*, deceived our first parents, (Gen. iii.) and, from that time to this, has been but too successful in deceiving their posterity. His *seven* heads,<sup>3</sup> with crowns (or diadems) upon them, and his ten horns, express a prodigious quantity of *worldly power and elevation*, such as he in vain offered to our pure and virtuous Lord in the day of his temptation. This agrees with other passages of Scripture, in which he is called “the Prince of this

<sup>1</sup> *Ἀρχαίος, ὁ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.*

<sup>2</sup> The ancient interpreters, Methodius, followed by Arethas and Primasius, understood by the woman *ἡ ἐκκλησία*, by the dragon, *ὁ Διαβολος*. And. Cæsar. com. in locum.

<sup>3</sup> See ch. vi. 4, and the notes. It must be observed, that the dragon has seven heads and ten horns, the same as the wild beast, his minister, to whom he delegates his power. But there is this difference, he has seven crowns on his seven heads, the beast has ten crowns on his ten horns, but horns are kings or kingdoms. (Dan. vii. 24.) This imports, that it was during the continuance and administration of the two beasts, that the governing power was divided among the kings. The power of the dragon, before he was joined by these associates, is of a more general description, extensive as the inhabitants of the earth, and exercised long before and long after the appearance of the wild beasts.

World, the God of the World, the Prince of the power of the Air," (John xii. 31 ; 2 Cor. iv. 4 ; Eph. ii. 2.) To this is added another description of him, that with his tail, his ignoble and brutish part, he drags after him, as with a net, (*συρει*,) a third part of the stars of heaven, and casts them on the earth. This may denote the original apostasy of those angels, who, in heaven, "kept not their first estate," (Jude 6,) for he is now attended by those angels; or it may signify the artful machinations by which he made the ministers of religion subservient to his wicked designs, (Bishop Newton *ad loc.*;) or it may be understood to have reference to both these apostasies, for the arch-fiend has succeeded in accomplishing such rebellions both in heaven and earth.

The object of this furious beast was, to devour the hope of the Church, the Messiah, designated as such by prophecy through all its ages previous to this expected birth, the male child, whose description is, that "he was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." This character and power, our Lord specifies as belonging to himself, (Rev. ii. 27 ; xix. 15 ;) and it is awarded to him prophetically in the second Psalm. The iron rod is the sceptre of the Messiah, the crook of "the great Shepherd of Israel," dreadful to the enemies of his fold, but a sure protection to "the sheep who obey his voice," (Heb. xiii. 20 ; John x. 3, 14, 16 ; Rev. vii. 17.)

Hitherto it appears that the symbol of the newborn Child belongs most appropriately to Christ; but the last clause in the five verses confirms it beyond all manner of doubt; for, to escape the jaws of the dragon, he is "*caught up unto God and to his throne;*" not only to be protected by the presence of God, but to take the station there exclusively appropriated to him by holy scripture, and in which we



have seen him seated, *in the “midst of the throne of God,”* ch. v. 6. It is “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” (ch. xxii. 3; Acts ii. 30; Heb. viii. 1; xii. 2.) He is both the Parent and the Son of the Christian Church. The Parent, when in his divine nature, “before the foundation of the world,” he formed it, and engaged to redeem it, (1 Pet. i. 20; Rev. xiii. 8.) The Son, and first-born Son, when he derived an human existence from Abraham, in the line of David, &c., and performed his engagement. Hence he is styled by the prophet, both the root and the offspring of Jesse, (Isa. xi. 1. 10.)

Ver. 6. *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore years.*] By referring to Isaiah xli. 17—20; Ezek. xx. 35—39; Hos. ii. 14—20; Matt. iv. 1—11, it will appear, that the word *wilderness* denotes a place of habitation scanty of sustenance, where food miraculously given is necessary for support of life; but where such support, united with the correction which is the effect of a desolate and perilous situation, produces excellent fruits of religious improvement. Religion abode with the Israelites in the wilderness during forty years of miraculous preservation. She fled again to the wilderness with the prophet Elijah, and was there miraculously supported and restored to her own land. (1 Kings xvii. xviii.) Thus the Church of Christ, after the birth of the promised seed, persecuted by the dragon and his agents, flees for refuge to obscure retreats; and is there miraculously preserved during a time appointed, 1260 years, of which more will be said as we advance in considering this prophecy.

Ver. 7—13. *And there was war in heaven, &c.*] This passage, beginning with the seventh, and end-

ing with the thirteenth verse, should be read as *in parenthesis* ; because it is plainly no part of the prophecy as contained in the narration, both before and after it, which is here suspended, and then renewed again ; for verses six and fourteen, (the one at the beginning, the other at the end, of the parenthesis,) contain the same matter, and give the same information, thereby showing the junction of the parts to be complete.

## VER. 6.

The woman fled into the *wilderness*,  
where she has a *place* prepared of *God*,  
that they should *feed* her there 1260  
years.

## VER. 14.

That she might flee into the *wilderness*,  
into her *place*, two wings of a great  
eagle were given to her,  
where she is *nourished* there for a time,  
times, and half a time, from the face  
of the serpent.

This is nearly the same narration, varied only by the difference of mood and tense required by the context ; and the *period of abode* is the same, as hath been shown, (ch, xi. 2, note ; ) and the *place* is *divinely* prepared for her. But since now (in ver. 14) the narration is about to proceed, so it here begins with an additional information, that she is conveyed by the wings of the great Eagle, that is, by divine, miraculous aid.<sup>1</sup>

The transaction, related in the parenthesis, is of a date far prior to the history related in the prophecy ; and as such is alluded to in Jude 6, and 2 Pet. ii. 4.

It is a warfare or rebellion, of which Satan was the leader *in heaven*, whence being expelled, he attempts to pursue the same mischievous course *on earth*. Both these wars are to be understood in a spiritual sense only. The tempter seduced some of the blessed angels from their happy state of obedience to the divine laws. The leading angel, who,

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xix. 4 ; Isa, xl. 31 ; Psa. xci. 4.

in the figurative language of Scripture, is said to fight against Satan in behalf of the Church, is called *Michael*, the import of whose name is *who-like-God*. By some commentators he is supposed to be the Messiah himself. It is difficult to concede this; but certainly he fights under the banner of Christ, who is the head of the Church, not only on earth, but in heaven, whither the power of his creation and of his redemption is said to extend, and where angels and principalities are subjected to him, (Eph. i. 10; iii. 15; Phil. ii. 10; Col. i. 16—20.) Thus there are two rebellions against his name and power, the one in heaven, the other on earth. Both are comprehended in Milton's sublime poem.

The narration contained in the parenthesis shows us, more expressly than any other passages of scripture, the formidable power of the enemy of mankind, and the divine protection that we may obtain against it.

Ver. 15, 16. *And the serpent cast out of his mouth, &c.*] Overwhelming calamity is often represented by the sacred writers as a torrent or flood of water, bearing down all before it; from this extreme danger, however, the favour of God delivers his servants. (Ps. cxxiv.; Isa. xvii. 12; Jer. xii. 5.) Such a flood the adversary now raises against the Church of Christ; the waves and torrents of worldly power, stirring up the madness of the rulers, and of the people against the Lord, and against his anointed. (Ps. ii.; lxxxix. 9, 10; Rev. xvii. 15.) Such were the persecutions under the heathen emperors of Rome, under the last and most formidable of which, (the Dioclesian,) the Christian religion, almost subdued, was wonderfully delivered by *earthly* resources, first, in the refuge afforded to the harassed Christians by the barbarians, (Euseb. de Vit. Constant.

lib. ii. c. 53.) and at length more signally and effectually by the emperor Constantine himself, being induced to support their interest, in order to strengthen his own against the common enemy; for the princes opposed to him were persecutors of the Christians.

In the western division of the empire allotted to Constantius Chlorus, the Father of Constantine, the Christians obtained an earlier respite from the severities of this persecution than in the other divisions, in consequence of which they had greatly increased in estimation and influence at the time when Constantine succeeded to that throne; (Eusebius de Martyr. Palestin. c. 3;) and being joined by those who had taken shelter among the barbarians, they formed a large, united, and resolute body, which it was the interest of the new emperor, now saluted as such by his army, to conciliate and attach; and an edict in their favour followed this transaction; and a standard of the cross was carried before his victorious army. But whether this conduct of Constantine, which delivered the Christians from apparent destruction, was the result of his political interest only, or of a miraculous vision of a cross, followed by a dream, in which Christ exhorted him to adopt this measure,—whether it was of earthly or heavenly production,—has been a subject of historical debate from that time to this.<sup>1</sup> I will avow myself satisfied on this head, by a perusal of Eusebius's Life of Constantine. This was written by a Christian bishop, and is professedly a panegyric, at the beginning of which the writer announces that he will omit the mention of the greater part of his actions, confining his narration to those which lead to piety and virtue.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is very extraordinary, that in this narration we very seldom

<sup>1</sup> The reader may see it ably and candidly discussed by Mosheim and his learned translator, in his Ecclesiastical History, cent. iv. ch. I.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. i. c. xi.

meet with any examples of the emperor's faith in Christ, or of such virtues as are accounted purely Christian, and these only in the latter period of his life. And referring to the edicts, speeches, and letters of the emperor,—a man supposed to have been favoured with personal communication from Christ,—we are surprised at the very rare mention of his Saviour's name, though he frequently magnifies with great piety and zeal, the only supreme God, in opposition to the Pagan deities. So that his religion appears, at the time of his supposed conversion, to be that of Deism, with little or no addition of Christian belief. But, is this consistent with the profession of one who had formed his religion on a miraculous intercourse with the Redeemer? Or, can we suppose otherwise than that he made this profession to be believed by others, though he had no conviction of it himself? This will account for his deferring the sacrament of baptism to the latest period of his life, when it is not improbable that he may have died a convert to the faith. His own words, addressed to the bishops, will show, that before that period, he had not accounted himself a true member of the Church. (Lib. iv. c. 62.) Here is sufficient proof, that the relief of the Christians from the overwhelming violence of imperial persecution, was the result rather of earthly politics, than immediate heavenly interference, and that in this respect, it has fulfilled that part of prophecy now under our consideration. The arch-fiend, thus foiled in his attempts against the Church, renews the war against the remnant of the woman's seed, as will be detailed in the ensuing chapters.

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In my exposition of the symbol of the great fiery dragon, of this present chapter, many years ago, I found myself opposed to the interpretation gene-



rally received, supported by the most able and learned commentators, and derived from the ingenious Joseph Mede. They understood it to be fulfilled exclusively in the pagan persecuting power of *Imperial Rome*.

As I had formed my opinion upon the most simple and plain deductions that I could acquire, by comparing this part of the prophecy with itself, and with other similar passages in scripture, and finding that the general opinion could not be maintained under such an examination, I assigned my reasons for dissent. And as I cannot express them in a less compass, or to better effect, I shall here repeat them in the same words:—

Where an interpretation is expressly given in the vision, as in ch. i. 20; v. 6, 9; xvii. 7, &c.; that interpretation must be used as the key to the mystery, in preference to all interpretations suggested by the imagination of man. Now in the 9th verse of this chapter such an interpretation is presented; the dragon is there expressly declared to be “that ancient serpent,” (ἀρχαῖος, ὁ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς,) called “the Devil;” known by the name of Διαβόλος in the Greek, and of Satan in the Hebrew; “who deceiveth the whole world.” Here are his names, and his acknowledged character. No words can more completely express them. No Roman emperor, nor succession of emperors, can answer to this description. The same dragon appears again in ch. xx. 2, and (as it were, to prevent mistake) he is there described in the very same words. But this re-appearance of the same dragon is in a very late period of the apocalyptic history, long after the expiration of the 1260 days, or years, and even after the wild beast and false prophet (who derive their power from the dragon during this period) are come to their end, (ch. xix. 20.) And the dragon is upon the

scene long after these times, and continues in action even at the end of another long period, a period of a thousand years, (ch. xx. 7.) He there pursues his ancient artifices, “deceiving the nations,” even till his final catastrophe, in ch. xx. 10, when the warfare of the Church is finished. Can this dragon then be an emperor of Rome? or any race or dynasty of emperors? Can he be any other than that ancient and eternal enemy of the Christian Church, who in this, as in all other scriptural accounts, is represented as the original contriver of all the mischief which shall befall it? In this drama, he acts the same consistent part, from beginning to end. He is introduced to early notice, as warring against the Church, (ch. ii. 10, 13;) as possessing a seat, or throne of power, in a great city inimical to the Christians; (ch. ii. 24;) as the author of doctrines corruptive of religion, which are called “the depths of Satan.” The evils brought on the Church under the trumpets, particularly the third and fifth, are ascribed to him. In the succeeding conflicts, the Church is attacked by his agents; by the wild beast and false prophet, (ch. xiii.) who derive their power from him; and at length he himself is described, as leading the nations against the camp of the saints, (ch. xx. 9.) Nothing appears more plain than the meaning of this symbol. The only appearances which may seem to favour the application of it to Imperial Rome are, the seven crowned heads, and the ten horns of the dragon. But the number seven is expressive of great universality; and although seven heads, or seven mountains, are in another prophecy applied to Rome in a particular sense, which may properly designate that city, yet they have a much more extended and general signification, expressive of the immense influence of Satan in the councils of this world. In a particular sense also, the seven

mountains and ten horns of the latter Roman empire are fitly attributed to Satan, because during the period of 1260 years, and perhaps beyond it, he makes use of the Roman empire, its capital city, and ten kings or kingdoms, as the instruments of his successful attack on the Christian Church. Joseph Mede, when he had no favourite hypothesis immediately in view, clearly saw and acknowledged the obvious interpretation of this symbol; and, in one of his learned sermons, has justly described the parties engaged in this spiritual conflict: 1. Satan, and his angels; 2. The woman and her seed.<sup>1</sup> If the Roman emperors are at all concerned in this warfare, it is only as subministrant agents of this arch-enemy of the Church. The dragon therefore appears to me, as he did to Venerable Bede, eleven centuries ago, to be “*Diabolus, potentiâ terreni regni armatus.*”<sup>2</sup> The worldly agents, whom he principally employs to carry on the warfare thus begun, will be described in the ensuing chapter.

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If the ingenious Joseph Mede has thus misled his followers in expounding the symbol of the fiery dragon, we may attribute the error partly to his overlooking the obvious and scriptural meaning, in the search of one which might give greater scope to his invention; and partly to a desire, which seems constantly to have possessed him, of finding the apocalyptic prophecies fulfilled in the fates of nations, and especially of those of the Roman empire. Another instance of this, and not less glaring, has occurred in this same chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Mede's Works, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> Bedæ Com. in loc.;—“the Devil, armed with the power of worldly dominion.”

The holy Child, prophetically destined<sup>1</sup> to “have the nations for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the world for his possession, sitting upon the throne of his Father and in the midst of that throne, and exercising universal rule with an iron or powerful sceptre,” is evidently our Lord Jesus Christ, and can be no other. Mede and Bishop Newton admit it in the proper and primitive sense, (see their comments, *ad locum*;) “But,” says the bishop, “Christ, who is himself invisible in the heavens, ruleth visibly in Christian magistrates, princes, and emperors.” And “here Constantine was particularly intended, for whose life the dragon Galerius laid many snares, but he providentially escaped them all,—was *caught up to the throne of God*, i. e. was advanced to the imperial throne, called the throne of God.”<sup>2</sup>

That our Lord Christ has, or needs any such representative on earth, endued with his vicarial power, will not be allowed by any well-instructed Protestant. Mede calls Constantine *the mystical Christ*; but gives no proof of his being in any respect typical of the Son of God. The types of Christ had long ago been superseded by the great antitype himself in full and glorious perfection. There is indeed no argument that can justify this deification of Constantine, for such would be his assumption to *the throne of God*. The argument which Bishop Newton brings forward, that in Rom. xiii. 1, “the powers that be are ordained of God,” does not imply any special power or rule conferred on any particular king or emperor, such as Constantine, but a general power granted to all magistrates, provided it be free from abuse.<sup>3</sup> Nor does the text admit of

<sup>1</sup> Ps. ii; Rev. ii. 26, 27; xix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ad solium Romanum subvéctus*.—Mede’s Works, p. 494.

<sup>3</sup> See Article of Religion, xxxviii. Of the civil magistrates.

such special designation, (Rev. ii. 26, 27,) though quoted with this view ; for the power over the nations is given to “ *him that overcometh and keepeth my works* (says our Lord) *unto the end.*” This is a general description of a faithful and pure Christian, and has been already explained as such in the notes on that passage. The reader also may be referred to chap. vii. 13, and the observations upon it, where he will see the results of the freedom from persecution conferred upon the Christians by the favour of Constantine ; for from that period may be dated those corruptions in the Church, and that relaxation of genuine Christian doctrine and virtue, which opened the way for the antichristian domination, as prophetically symbolized in the subsequent chapters. In these, the conflict between the dragon and the Church of Christ is continued, by the former bringing into view his aiders and abettors. So far as this twelfth chapter, the warfare is carried on without such particular instruments or agents on either side:

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## PART IV.

### SECTION III.

#### *The wild Beast from the Sea.*

CHAP. xii. ver. 18 ; xiii. 1—10.

18 And I stood upon the sand of the sea,

1 And I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion :



and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death ; and his deadly wound was healed : and all the world wondered after the beast.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast : and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast ? who is able to make war with him ?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies ; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them : and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity : he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Ch. xii. ver. 18. *And I stood upon the sand of the sea.*] Ἐσταθην, not ἐσταθη, appears to be the true reading.<sup>1</sup> The scene is now changed, and the prophet is so stationed as to behold it. It had been removed from the earth and sea, where the angel of the tenth chapter had begun to disclose the fortunes of the Church in the western kingdoms of the Gentiles ; it had been removed to heaven, to show the prime Mover of *all* the warfare. Both the combatants were of heavenly extraction, and had fought in heaven. These conflicts therefore were first described ; and the scene was changed to accommodate to them. But the battle, which had been begun in heaven, is now continued on earth ; and is to be brought to its conclusion under the seventh trumpet. Therefore, before the final conflict, wherein

<sup>1</sup> See the lect. var. in Griesbach.

the heavenly leader will again appear, the combatants on earth are also to be exhibited; first, those who continue the warfare on behalf of the dragon; then, those who engage on the part of the woman, or Church. Accordingly, the scene is again opened upon earth, and at the brink of the *sea*; because a formidable agent of the dragon, or satan, is to arise from that quarter. (Ch. xi. 7.)

Ch. xiii. ver. 1. *And I saw a wild beast rising up out of the sea.*] The sea, in prophetic language, signifies in general, the heathen world;<sup>1</sup> numerous and powerful armies of the Gentiles, marching against the people of God, are figuratively represented by the *stormy waves of the sea*.<sup>2</sup> Thus the ascent of the wild beast out of the *sea*, seems to signify his rise in *worldly* power, and probably also from the western Gentiles, who are more especially represented under this symbol. The four wild beasts of the prophet Daniel, representing so many successive tyrannies which overran the earth, are described, all of them, as ascending from the *sea*. There is a very striking resemblance between the wild beast of the Apocalypse and those of this prophet. It will be useful to exhibit them together: and it will be done most effectually in the Greek. The translation of Daniel into that language appears to be very close to the original, as given in Mr. Wintle's version:

DAN. vii. 2—15.

Θηρια μεγαλα'  
'Ανεβαινον ἐκ της θαλασσης'

1. Ως λεωνα' } στομα λαλουν  
(orig. a lion.) } μεγαλα.

REV. xiii. 1—18; xix. 20; xx. 4.

Θηριον'—ἐξουσιαν μεγαλην.  
'Ανεβαινον ἐκ της θαλασσης.

'Ως στομα λεοντος.

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. viii. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Is. xvii. 12, 13; Psalms lxxv. 7: lxxxix. 9, 10; xciii. 3, 4; Ezek. xxvi. 3, 7. See also note, ch. i. 14, 15.

2. Αριktos*	Οἱ ποδες αὐτου ὡς Αρκτου.
3. Παρδαλις*	Ομοιον παρδαλει.
4. { Θηριον* — ισχυρον περισσῶς, } φοβερων και εκθαμβων, οἱ οδον- } τες αὐτου σιδηροὶ* κ. τ. λ. } Κερατα δεκα αὐτω* } Δεκα βασιλεις* }	{ Θηριον* — ἔδωκεν αὐτω ὁ δρακων } την δυναμιν αὐτου και τον θρονον } και ἐξουσιαν μεγαλην. } Κερατα δεκα, — κεφαλαι ἑπτα. } { Δεκα διαδηματα, } { Δεκα βασιλεις. (Chap. xvii. 12.) }
Κερας ἕτερον μικρον*	Αλλο θηριον.
Οφθαλμοι ὡσει αὐθρωπου ἐν τῳ κε- } ρατι* }	Κερατα, — ομοια ἀρνιω* Ποιεῖ σημεια μεγαλα.
Στομα λαλῶν μεγαλα*	{ Στομα λαλῶν μεγαλα, και βλασφη- } μιαι, ἐλαλει ὡς δρακων.
*Ἔως καιρου και καιρῶν και γε ἡμισυ } καιρον* }	Μηναι τεσσαρακοντα δυο.
*Ἐποiei πολεμον μετα τῶν ἁγιων, και } ἰσχυσε προς αὐτους*	Πολεμον ποιῆσαι μετα τῶν ἁγιων, και } νικῆσαι αὐτους.
*Ἀντρεθη το θηριον, και ἀπωλετω* και } το σῶμα αὐτου ἐδοθη εις καυσιν πυ- } ρος.	*Ἐπιασθη το θηριον, και μετα τουτω ὁ } ψευδοπροφητης* — ἐβληθησαν οἱ δυο } εἰς την λιμνην τῆ πυρος. (Ch. xix. 20.)
Οἱ θρονοι ἐτεθησαν* — κριτηριον ἐκα- } θισε*	Και ειδον θρονους, και ἐκαθισαν ἐπ' αὐ- } τῶν, και κριμα ἐδοθη αὐτοις.
*Ὡς υἱος αὐθρωπου ἐρχομενος, και αὐτω } ἐδοθη ἡ ἀρχη* κ. τ. λ.	Και ἐβασίλευσαν μετα τῆ Χριστου. } (Chap. xx. 4 )

From this comparison, it must appear, that the beast of the Apocalypse (including the second beast, the false prophet, who is cotemporary with him, exercises his power, and exalts him to universal worship) bears striking resemblance to the beasts of Daniel; to all four of them in some respects; but more especially to the fourth; which, like the beast of the Apocalypse, has the same period of continuance allotted to him, at the end of which he is to be destroyed in like manner; and the destruction of both is followed by the establishment of the Messiah's reign. It will further appear, by a similar comparison, that the visions of the apocalyptic beast, and of this of the prophet Daniel, have a nearer resemblance to each other than the two famous visions of Daniel (of the beasts and of the image), yet these two visions of Daniel, on very satisfactory grounds, and by report of the best ancient and modern com-

mentators, are supposed to represent the same history.<sup>1</sup> The three first beasts of Daniel resemble those which appear to have been most formidable to the ancient world; the lion, the bear, the leopard; and which are enumerated as such by Hosea, (ch. xiii. 7, 8.); but the fourth beast is a non-descript. He was *diverse* from the other beast; exceedingly terrible; had iron teeth, and ten horns; and among the ten, one more dreadful than the rest, which sprang up after them. The beast of the Apocalypse is described as possessing the most terrible parts and properties of *all* the beasts of Daniel. He is in his general shape like a leopard; uniting uncommon agility with ferocious strength; he has the mouth of the lion, (Psalm xxii. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 17.); the paw of the bear, (1 Sam. xvii. 34, 37.) But his resemblance is much nearer to the fourth beast, whose more dreadful power he seems to possess. He has his ten horns, his ten kings, or kingdoms. He has the “mouth, speaking great things and blasphemies,” which is seen upon the little additional horn of the fourth beast of Daniel. To which little horn, the second beast of the Apocalypse, (intimately connected with the first, rising up *after* him to exercise *his* power, and to increase *his* dominion) will be found to bear strong resemblance, when we proceed to consider them together, and to apply St. Paul’s comment to them both. This will be done in the succeeding section, where the second beast becomes the object of more particular attention. It is enough at present to observe, that this resemblance *will* be shown. But sufficient evidence appears, already, to enable us to conclude, that since the beasts of Daniel, and especially the fourth, bear strong resemblance to the beast of the Apocalypse;

<sup>1</sup> See particulars in Bp. Newton’s Diss. on Prophecy, vol. i. 454. 8vo. Kett on Prophecy, vol. i. p. 320, &c. 4th ed.

their time of continuance being the same, as also their office (“to make war upon the saints, and to overcome them”); their destruction by fire, preceding and making way for the reign of the Messiah and his saints;—the interpretation of one will lead us nearly to that of the other. Now the four beasts of Daniel appear *by divine interpretation*, (Dan. vii. 17, 23.) to be four successive empires, established in worldly power, administered with tyranny and oppression, and hostile to true religion. And the fourth empire is the most cruel, and the most oppressive to the saints; principally by producing “the little horn,” a power of an extraordinary nature, *diverse* from the rest; which, from a slender beginning, usurping the power of all the preceding empires, converts it to the establishment of a blasphemous religion, and of persecution for righteousness’ sake.

Commentators seem generally agreed, that the fourth beast of the prophet Daniel represents the Roman empire.<sup>1</sup> This beast continued till the times of the Messiah; and was the basis on which the ten horns, or kingdoms, into which the Roman power was afterwards divided, had their foundation. The same horns appear upon the apocalyptical beast; denoting that he belongs to the same period, and indeed that he is the same. The difference which may be found in the description of the two beasts, first by Daniel, secondly by St. John, may perhaps be fully accounted for, in the three following circumstances: 1. That the description of Daniel was

<sup>1</sup> See the arguments which are weighty, and the authorities which are of the first antiquity, clearly stated by Bishop Newton. (Dissert. on Proph. vol. i. p. 451, &c. 8vo. edit.) Archbishop Secker, who, with his usual accuracy and diligence, had studied this prophecy, as expounded by Joseph Mede to signify the Roman empire, exclaimed with his author, “Tantum non articulus fidei!” Wintle on Daniel, notes, p. 35. Mede’s Works, p. 736.



to be accommodated in such a manner as to take in the type contained in his prophecy, which is supposed to be fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes; while that of St. John (the type having been fulfilled before his times) had to look only to the latter days, to the later accomplishment. 2. That the beast of the Apocalypse, though most like the fourth beast of Daniel, is of a more general universal character, bearing some resemblance also to the three preceding beasts. 3. That St. John's prophecy, being the latest, must be expected (according to the general tenor of scriptural prophecy) to afford a nearer and more exact view of the objects described, by revealing intelligence not communicated before. It is sufficient at present, before we have examined more particulars, and the additional beast united with him, to observe, that this first beast of the Apocalypse appears to be that worldly tyrannical domination, which, for many ages, even from the times of the Babylonish captivity, (for then the first beast of Daniel begins to oppress and to persecute the righteous "for righteousness' sake," Matth. v. 10,) had been hostile to the Church; but more especially under the fourth beast of Daniel, the Roman usurpation, which, prior to the accession of Constantine, had afflicted the saints with many bloody persecutions. Now, under this beast of the Apocalypse, (including his false prophet or minister,) we seem to behold that same oppressive and persecuting power renewed, and continued for ages, with some variety of exhibition; even through the long period of 1260 years, after the Roman empire had become divided into its ten horns, or kingdoms.

Ver. 2. *And the dragon gave him his power, &c.]* The dominion exercised by this beast is unjust, tyrannical, oppressive, diabolical. It is not a power

legally administered, for the good of the subject ; for such “ power is ordained of God ;” the magistrate duly exercising such a power, is pronounced to be “ a minister of good, bearing not the sword in vain,” (Rom. xiii. 1—4 ; 1 Tim. ii. 2, 3.) The Christian religion gives a heavenly sanction to such lenient and beneficial power : but the authority of the beast is founded on another sanction ; on that of the dragon or Satan, who converts legal government into arbitrary oppression. When the legislative and executive powers act from the impulse of worldly and diabolical passions, this dire usurpation and tyranny will appear. But it is the blessed work of Christianity, by introducing other motives of government, to repress these enormities, and finally, by the intervention of heavenly aid, to extirpate them. Yet, during the long period of 1260 years, not yet ended, the power of the beast becomes more ferocious and destructive, by receiving the apparent sanctions of religion, as the world has experienced under the Papal and Mahometan superstitions.

Ver. 3. *And one of his heads, as having been wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed.*] The beast, like the dragon, from whom he receives his power, has seven heads ; which are explained to be so many mountains, or strong holds, the seats and supports of his oppressive dominion.<sup>1</sup> The dragon, and they who held the reins of worldly power under him, had many such. Such had been ancient Babylon ; such was Rome, spiritually called Babylon, (1 Pet. v. 13.) One of these heads, or chief supports of tyrannical power, had received a mortal wound ; and yet, to the surprise of the world, and the exultation of the wicked, the beast survives the blow.

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. viii. 9.

During the three first centuries of the Christian times, the fourth beast of Daniel, the Roman monarchy, had violently persecuted the Church. He was then in full vigour and dominion. And when did he seem to cease his war against the saints? when to appear no longer beastly? when to remit his persecuting ferocity? when to receive an apparent mortal wound?—At the accession of Constantine, the first Christian emperor; whose laws, enacted for the establishment, protection, and propagation of the Christian religion, seemed at that time to have inflicted a mortal wound on the beast. He was smitten on his Roman, on his principal head; and his death appeared certain.<sup>1</sup> But the Christian leaders seizing, too eagerly, the power and riches of the world, and ensnared in the temptation, contributed most effectually to heal the deadly wound of the beast; they restored him again to life and to power; to a power tenfold more dangerous than before, when a corrupt administration of civil tyranny began to be supported and abetted by ecclesiastical authority. Under which new form, he became an object of wonder, and of worship to the deluded inhabitants of the world. But this effect will be considered more at large, when we have taken the additional beast, called the false prophet, into view. It will be useful at this time to compare the deadly wound of the beast in this passage (which wound turns out to be not deadly) with his existence, and his non-existence, both predicated of him at the same period, in ch. xvii.

<sup>1</sup> See the opinions of those times in Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. x.; also Vit Constant. lib. ii. cap. xix. xlii. xlv. &c.; where, upon the death of *the dragon*, (for so Maximin and Maxentius and the foes of the Church are called,) a long peace and virtuous enjoyment is promised to Christians. They should have said, the death of the *beast*, that of the dragon is not foretold.





wilt fall down and worship me," (Matt. iv. 8, 9.) Whoever, to attain worldly eminence, relinquishes his trust in God, and deviates from the path of the divine laws, withdraws his allegiance from God, and transfers it unto the devil.—And this allegiance may also be transferred to the agents of the devil; to the powers of this world, who promote his infernal interests in opposition to that heavenly kingdom, which we daily pray for, and which we are bound daily to promote.

Ib. *Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*] The battle to be fought with the beast, who proclaims and enforces idolatry, is of a spiritual nature. They who, giving up their faith in God, worship after the ordinances of the beast, are overcome by him: but every faithful Christian, who adheres "to the word of the testimony, loving not his life, even unto death, overcomes him by the blood of the Lamb," (ch. xii. 11.)

Ver. 5. *Blasphemies.*] These shall be considered, when we take into view the assistant beast and false prophet, who enabled the first beast to blaspheme to the utmost excess. (See note below, ch. xiii. 5, 6, 7.)

Ib. *Power [to continue in action] forty-two months.*] Πουσαι, applied to time, signifies to continue, as in Acts xv. 33; xx. 3; to continue, during this period, in his evil practices against the Church.

Verses 5, 6, 7. *And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, &c.*] It will be useful to observe, that in Daniel vii. 8, 20, 25, the fourth, or Roman beast, does not obtain "his mouth speaking great things," (they are the very same words used by both prophets,) nor open his mouth for blasphemy, until he has produced the little horn, that is, *after* he has produced the ten kings. So in

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. ii. 7.



the Apocalypse, it is not in the first period of the beast's progress that he exalts himself so superbly, and becomes an object of worship. This exaltation is accomplished for him by the intervention of the second beast, his minister in iniquity, whose office and actions are described in the subsequent part of this chapter. But in this description of the first beast, ch. xiii. 1—9, we may discriminate his gradual progress; 1. Under verses 1 and 2, the Roman tyranny under its pagan persecuting emperors, to whom the apostate Christians *literally* offered incense; 2. (ver. 3.) His wound at the accession of Constantine; 3. His recovery, and the great admiration of him in his new form; 4. His additional power and increased dominion, when, after his division into ten kingdoms, the little horn of Daniel, the false prophet, springs up in him; when the harlot directs the reins, (ch. xvii.) The period of 1260 years seems to be that of his renewed life, and of his increased dominion, displayed in verses 5, 6, 7. [*"They who dwell in heaven,"*] are not only the heavenly inhabitants, literally speaking, but the faithful Christians on earth, whose "conversation is in heaven;" whose "building" and home are there; who account themselves "strangers and pilgrims upon earth."<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 8. *Book of Life.*] See note, ch. iii. 5.

Ver. 9. *If any one have an ear, &c.*] See note, ch. ii. 7.

Ver. 10. *If any one leadeth into captivity, &c.*] After the fearful picture exhibited of the victorious power of the beast, a comfort is derived from these words; which contain an assurance from the Al-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 9, 13: Eph. ii. 6, 19; 1 Pet. i. 17. They are opposed to "those who inhabit the earth," and who are said to worship the beast, ch. xiii. 3, 8: xvii. 8.

mighty, that the wicked shall not finally prosper. The cause of iniquity sometimes flourishes during a long period, and under various instruments: but the individuals employed to promote its reign, have no lasting enjoyment or prosperity. They suffer in their turn the evils which they introduce, and inflict on others. This great truth in the providential government of God, is exemplified by Dr. Jortin, in the sufferings and deaths of the most noted persecutors.<sup>1</sup> We have seen it exemplified in our own times, during the progress of the French revolution. The individuals who chiefly distinguished themselves in overturning legal government and promoting persecution, oppression, a beastly domination, and the overthrow of Christianity, enjoyed but a precarious and short-lived power. Most of them were cut off in the midst of their ambitious career, or consigned to misery in a distant, wretched colony.

The saints must be patient; the great day of recompense will surely come, (Heb. x. 36.)—"Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," (Luke xii. 32.) "And it is the office of the Messiah to lead captivity captive," (Psa. lxxviii. 18; Eph. iv. 8.)

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Commentators of all ages have looked more or less to the Roman empire for the fulfilment of this prophecy; and the principal question of debate has been, whether it is to be found in the power abused under the heathen emperors, or under that afterwards usurped and equally abused by Christian, or, to speak more truly, antichristian Rome. The acute and eloquent Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, has exerted his best talents to maintain the former of these opinions.

<sup>1</sup> Remarks on Eccl. Hist vol. iii. pp. 246—322.

He built his system upon that of Grotius, who had employed much learning in his attempt to show the fulfilment of this prophecy in the heathen emperors, but especially in Domitian. The bishop applies it, with more apparent effect, to Dioclesian, and to his much longer and severer persecution. But his arguments have been examined, and refuted, by many Protestant writers; by none more ably than by Vitranga, who has shown that although in the early parts of the prophecy, it may, with great appearance of truth, be applied to the times of the heathen emperors, yet, that in the continuance of it,—in the subsequent chapters setting forth the progress, and actions, and end of the beast,—all agreement ceases; and that we must have recourse to the times of the ten kingdoms rising out of the Roman empire, and the ecclesiastical power of Rome at the head of them, before we can see and acknowledge the fulfilment.

Now as this notion of the prophecy being fulfilled in the heathen emperors who oppressed the primitive Christians was natural in those times, so with equal reason have the sufferers by papal persecution applied this prophecy to their times. The reformers in the sixteenth century, exposed to the same persecution from the same source, adopted similar contracted views of this prophecy, confining it, in their turn, to their own case. But there are two circumstances in the symbolical prediction, which seem to require *a more extended view and solution of it*:—first, in verse the second of this chapter, the resemblance of this wild beast, not only to the fourth of the prophet Daniel, that is to the savage Roman empire, but also to the three which preceded it, the Greek, the Persian, and the Babylonian, seems plainly to indicate that in them also he is typified; and secondly, in verses seven and eight,

it is pronounced expressly that “ power is given to him ” (the power of the dragon) “ over all kindreds (or tribes) and tongues and nations, and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.” Now this is a description of the inhabitants of the earth as general and universal as can be imagined, and has only one exception : it stretches far beyond the pale of the Roman empire, in all its divisions, whether of time or space, into all times wherein tyrannical rule has oppressed and enslaved mankind ; in all portions of the globe where true religion, by its salutary influence, has not allayed the brutal passions of men.

Attention to this inherent part of the prophecy which has been overlooked by most of the commentators, has occasioned me to interpret it in the way that I have set forth. Mede very properly denominates this seven-headed beast, *Bestia secularis*, in contradistinction to the two-horned beast, whom he calls *Bestia Ecclesiastica*, (Works, p. 498 and 505.) The former seems to have been in action from the earliest times of government after the form patriarchal, even from the times of Nimrod.<sup>1</sup> But the later enormities which are displayed in the prophecy of Daniel, and in this and the ensuing chapters of the Apocalypse, during the appointed period of 1260 years, are to be dated only from the junction and co-operation of the two. These are now to be con-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. x. 8, 9. “ A mighty hunter,” of *men*, say the commentators. He was the first who founded an extensive domination, or, to speak more properly, is specified as such in the history of mankind ; for the short and confined view which the scriptural history has given us of the antediluvian world, attributes the divine anger which occasioned the Deluge in a great measure to this cause, “ the earth was filled with violence,” the violence of “ mighty men which were of old, men of renown.” Gen vi. 4, 11.

sidered as making the principal part of the warfare between the Dragon and the Woman, under their united ministry in his service.

The period of forty-two months being mentioned in this chapter for the last time, presents itself for a minute enquiry into this and other concurrent periods of the same duration.

There are three of these repeatedly mentioned in the Apocalypse, which will appear more evident from the following scheme, copied, after a careful review of it, out of my former work. Perfect success, however, is not to be expected in the development of prophecies as yet only partially enlightened by the occurrence of the predicted events. In examining these, we must be contented with the light afforded by past or present circumstances, and not presume to a foreknowledge, unsupported by direct assurances of Scripture.

The three periods are—

I. A time, and times, and dividing of time.

Καιρον και καιρους και ἡμισυ καιρου. Rev. xii. 4.

Εως καιρῶ και καιρῶν και γε ἡμισυ καιρου. Dan. vii. 25.

II. Forty-two months.

Μῆνας τεσσαρακοντα δυο.

III. Twelve hundred and sixty days.

Ἡμερας χιλιας διακοσιας ἐξηκοντα.

*a.* During this period, the saints, or times and laws, are given into the hand of the little horn, or king, rising *after* the ten kings. Dan. vii. 25; xiii. 7.

*b* The woman is nourished in the wilderness from the presence of the serpent. Rev. xii. 14.

*c* The Gentiles tread the holy city. Rev. xi. 2; Luke xxi. 24.

*d* The beast continues to act against the saints. Rev. xiii. 5.

*e* The witnesses prophesy in sackcloth. Rev. xi. 3.

*f* The woman is nourished in the wilderness. Rev. xii. 6.

Now if we compare *a* and *d* together, they will be found to relate the *same* history; therefore the periods contained under I. and II. appear to be the same. Again, compare *b* with *f*; they are the *same*



history: therefore I. and III. are the same periods. But I. which thus appears to be the same with III., has been seen also to be the same with II.; therefore all three periods are the *same*. Thus these three prophetic periods are of the same length or duration: they measure the same *quantity* of time. But another question will arise; whether they measure the same identical period: for, although allowed to measure the same quantity of time, they may possibly succeed each other; or if they be cotemporary in *some* parts, yet it may not appear that they quadrate and agree in *all*: their beginnings and their endings may not be at the same points. Now it will not be difficult to show that all these periods, I.  $\begin{Bmatrix} a \\ b \end{Bmatrix}$ , II.  $\begin{Bmatrix} c \\ d \end{Bmatrix}$ , III.  $\begin{Bmatrix} e \\ f \end{Bmatrix}$ , have *some* common coincidence; they are *all* contained under the sixth trumpet. *a* and *d* exhibit the same history, told by different prophets, viz. that of the antichristian oppressor expected to arise out of the Roman empire, after its division into ten kingdoms. *b* and *f* contain the same history,—the nourishment of the woman in the wilderness,—which, for a particular reason, is repeated.<sup>1</sup> But the beast, represented in *a* and *d*, receives his power from the dragon, (ch. xiii. 2, 5.) who is certainly described as cotemporary with the woman; and makes war against her seed, the seed of the woman in the wilderness, the saints. Therefore *a* and *d*, and *b* and *f*, contain histories, *some parts* of which at least are of the same period. Again, any one who reads ch. xi. 2, 3, with attention, must perceive that *c* and *e* are purposely brought together, in order to show that they contain the same period, but *e*, in some of its parts, is certainly cotemporary with *a* and *d*; with the times of the beast.

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. xii. 14.

For the beast of *a* and *d* slays the witnesses of *e*. And thus all of them appear to coterporise in *some parts* of their course. But, that they agree and coincide in *all* their points; that they synchronise, as Mede expresses it, in every part of their periods, so as to have the same beginning, middle, and end, will not be so easily admitted.

But, to render this examination less difficult, we may begin with reducing the six periods to four: for, 1. *a* and *d* may safely be pronounced to be the self-same period; viz. the time during which the antichristian oppressor is permitted to act against the saints. The history is the same, but given in different expression, yet amounting to the same duration, by two different prophets.<sup>1</sup> 2. *b* and *f* evidently set forth the same history and time; viz. the nourishment of the woman in the wilderness. We are therefore enabled to reduce the *six* periods to *four*:—1. the period of the continuance of the beast; *a* and *d*:—2. that of the continuance of the woman in the wilderness; *b* and *f*:—3. That of the Gentiles continuing to tread the holy city; *c*:—4. that of the witnesses continuing to prophesy in sackcloth; *e*.

This is what Joseph Mede has intitled, *nobilis iste quaternio vaticiniorum, æqualibus temporum intervallis insignium*;<sup>2</sup> whose periods he has endeavoured to exhibit as synchronising in *all* their parts. His first attempt is to show the synchronism of the time of the beast, (*a, b,*) with that of the woman in the wilderness, (*b, f,*) upon this ground, that their times *begin* together, and consequently must run together throughout. But the proof of their beginning together does not appear free from objection. They be-

<sup>1</sup> The forty-two months of St. John are exactly equal to three years and an half, the time, and times, and half a time, of Daniel. See note, ch. xi. 2; xii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Clav. Apoc. p. 419.

gin together, says he, from one and the same point of time; namely, when the dragon is overcome and cast down to the earth. Now, if this be the point of time, from which the *sojournment of the woman in the wilderness* is to be dated, yet it can scarcely be that of the commencement of the beast's reign. For there is an interval, full of action, between the fall of the dragon and the rise of the beast; namely, that in which the dragon pursues the woman, casting after her torrents of water; and it is not till after he has in vain tried this method of destroying her, that, enraged at his disappointment, he raises up *the beast* to war against the rest of her offspring. (See ch. xii. 13—17; and ch. xiii. 1.) That the beast and the woman are cotemporary in some parts of their periods, is very probable; and it is probable likewise, that their beginnings are not far distant from each other,—so that from what has hitherto appeared, they *may* be the same:—but this has not yet seemed to admit of complete demonstration.

The synchronism of the beast, with the prophecy of the witnesses, seems likewise defective in proof. These, says Mede, are both brought down to the same period of *consummation*, at the end of the sixth trumpet. But, if the period of the witnesses be allowed to end with the sixth trumpet, it is otherwise with the period of the beast, whose warfare against the Church is particularly described under the seventh trumpet; when, together with the false prophet, he is taken and slain. (Ch. xix. 19.) Besides, nothing is more manifest, than that the beast does not come to his end at the same time with the witnesses; for the witnesses are slain *by him*; and when they are slain, they *finish their prophetic office*; as is expressly declared in ch. xi. 7. Add to this, that the earthquake and fall of one tenth of the city, which concludes the prophecy of the witnesses, and

also the sixth trumpet, (ch. xi.) cannot be the same with the great slaughter and total victory under the seventh trumpet (ch. xix.); when the beast is destroyed. The synchronism therefore is defective of proof.<sup>1</sup>

The four grand apocalyptic periods are involved very much together, and before the final completion of them *all* has taken place, it may not be in the power of man to settle the times when each of them had its commencement. But, for the reasons above assigned, I am inclined to conjecture that the period of the beast may be found to derive its beginning somewhat later than that of the woman in the wilderness; and to receive its termination somewhat later than that of the witnesses. His times seem rather later than either of theirs. And it may perhaps be found, that those of the woman and of the witnesses are the same; with which the other remaining period, that of the Gentiles treading the holy city, seems also to accord. Commentators seem to have been too adventurous in fixing the exact commencement of these periods, which appear to be involved in a purposed obscurity, which *the event* only can

<sup>1</sup> This attempt of the ingenious author of the *Clavis Apocalyptica* to synchronise these periods, seems to me conclusive in very few stages of it. He appears to approach near to the truth, in many instances, but the proofs are not positive and satisfactory. The prophecies do not seem to supply the means of that strict demonstration which he has attempted; and, one proof failing (as we have seen in these first propositions,) that which is built upon it must fail also. There is one passage in this able divine's commentary, from which it may be collected, that he did not always conclude the termination of the beast's career to be exactly synchronal with the termination of the prophecy of the witnesses. He plainly asserts the one to belong to the sixth, the other to the seventh trumpet. (See his Works, pages 490, 491.) And his method of solving this difficulty must be thought defective; for surely, the end of the beast is his *final* confinement in the lake of fire, ch. xix. 20, and not his *imagined* expulsion from the city of Rome.



clear. But it may be probable, that the twelve hundred and sixty years of the Gentiles; of the woman in the wilderness, and of the witnesses; will come to their conclusion, before the antichristian reign of *the beast* is seen finally to cease. And this is all that I dare advance concerning prophecies which are yet fulfilling, and are to be fulfilled.

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## PART IV.

### SECTION IV.

#### *The Beast from the earth or land, or the false Prophet.*<sup>1</sup>

CHAP. xiii. ver. 11 to the end.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him; and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16 And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.

<sup>1</sup> He is denominated *ὁ ψευδοπροφητης*. Ch. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10.



17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

WE may make some safe and useful advance towards the explication of this prophecy, by first paraphrasing the words of the original, and then adding such an interpretation of the symbols as has been adopted by discrete commentators; and afterwards I will offer to the reader's consideration some corrections and additions resulting from my own inquiries.

11. “Another wild beast,” for he is of the same description as the former,—*Θηριον*,—with this difference, that whereas the first came from the stormy sea, as the four heathen monarchies had done, (Dan. vii. 3.) subduing and oppressing the people of God,—this second beast arises from the earth or land, (*ἐκ τῆς γῆς*) from among the inhabitants, whom he subjugates by false arts and pretensions. He bears upon his head two horns, like the horns of a lamb, (the Lamb is Christ, ch. v. 6, &c.) His speech is dragon-like, as that of a false prophet, (see ch. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10.) discovering that in outward show only he is lamb-like; and the sequel of the description clearly imports, that he is diabolical and antichristian. He unites with the first beast, and, as his minister, (Irenæus calls him his armour-bearer, *ὑπερασπιστης*,) exercises all the power of that beast, which was derived from the dragon before him, (ver. 4.) and makes the earth or land, and its inhabitants, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound had
12. been healed. This he effects by performing miracles; for such they *appear* to be, *ἐνωπιον*
- 13.

- τῶν ἀνθρώπων, in the sight of *the* men,<sup>1</sup> in imitation of Elijah, by whom fire was called down from heaven, betokening divine acceptance, (1 Kings xviii. 30—40.); but these are not real,
14. but pretended miracles, *for they deceive*; nor are they of divine operation, nor such ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, in the sight of God, or of his faithful servants.<sup>2</sup> But, the weak in faith are beguiled by them, and, at the persuasion or command of this false prophet, they make an image or statue in honour
15. of the first beast. And to this statue it is permitted to give πνεῦμα, breath, or apparent life; so that it should utter decrees, and cause those
16. who refuse to worship it, to be slain. Men of all stations, ranks, and degrees, are compelled by him to receive the mark of the beast, his
17. name, or the number of his name, as his slaves and idolatrous worshippers, or to be deprived of the common rights and comforts of society, the power of buying and selling so as to preserve
18. life. Persons of wisdom and understanding are exhorted to calculate the number of the wild beast; for it is the number of a man, 666.

This paraphrase I have endeavoured to make faithful to the words of the prophecy, and so general in the explication of the symbols, that nearly all of the distinguished commentators might have agreed in it. The rise, progress, and actions of the second wild beast, called also the false prophet, (ch. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10.) so far as is here stated, few would be disposed to reject: but in the application of it to history, there is a wide difference of opinion. We are prepared to expect it, for such had appeared

<sup>1</sup> Τῶν Ἀνθρώπων.

<sup>2</sup> Τοὺς ἐν τῷ Οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας. Ch. xiii. 6, compared with Phil. iii. 20.

respecting the rise and character of the first beast, so nearly connected with this.

The ancient interpreters, Andreas Cæsariensis, Arethas and Primasius, who had been able to collect some probable observations on the prophecy of the wild beast from the sea,—because it had received some share of fulfilment in the heathen persecutions before their times,—have made but few and imperfect attempts to throw light upon the rise and character of the second beast from the land, and for this reason, that the antitype had then not appeared, or rather, had not made such progress as to warn them of its perfect agreement with the type. Their notion is consequently very general; they look only to the coming of an *antichrist* in some future time, and the renewal of the Roman persecutions under him.

These interpreters, although they lived so much nearer to the times of the persecuting emperors than our later commentators, seem never to have observed, that in those times, the philosophers of the Platonic or Pythagorean schools, by magical arts, and by holding commerce with the *δαιμονες*, *dæmons*, had performed such apparent miracles as might entitle them to the character of this second wild beast. This discovery, such as it is, was reserved for the active genius and extraordinary learning of Grotius, followed by our Hammond.<sup>1</sup> The acute Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, gladly seized the hints thus afforded, that by such an interpretation of the prediction by Protestant writers, he might avert its obvious application to the Church of Rome. Grotius had applied it to Apollonius Tyanæus, in the reign of the emperor Domitian. The Roman Catholic prelate transferred it more fitly to that of Dioclesian;

<sup>1</sup> Grotius died, 1645. Dr. Hammond, 1660. Bp. Bossuet, 1704.

both of them with so little congruence to, and illustration of, this prophecy, that little or no notice has been taken of them by more recent commentators. By these it is generally and justly supposed, that we are to look to those times when the two wild beasts began to act in concert together, and *after the “deadly wound of the first had been healed,”* (this date is given, and twice repeated, ch. xiii. 3, 12, 14.); which is confessedly subsequent to the period of the persecuting emperors.<sup>1</sup>

The holy men, who, feelingly aware of the debasement of Christianity by its rulers and false teachers, continued to profess and practise the pure doctrines and simple rites of the primitive Church, were the first to discover, as they were the first to feel and experience, the fulfilment of this prophecy in the corrupt hierarchy of the then Christian Church. For some centuries, such persons had suffered from this source many forms of “persecution for righteousness’ sake :” but the period at length arrived, when they were denounced *by the Roman pontiff, as obstinate heretics and outcasts from the Church*, and armies of crusaders were levied for their utter destruction. In such a situation, they could not fail to perceive, in their pious attention to the prophecies, comparing them with the “evident signs of the times,” that the two wild beasts, the supreme powers civil and eccle-

<sup>1</sup> Some writers of the Roman Catholic church have endeavoured to show, that the prophecies of antichrist and the false prophet have had their fulfilment in Luther and the Protestants: and the attempt has been repeated of late by one of their bishops, under the title of a “History of the Church,” with the fictitious name of “Pastorini.” But the more prudent and discreet writers of this communion tell us, that antichrist is not yet come, nor to be expected till toward the end of the world. The Protestants affirm that he is come, and is now in continued operation; and the proofs of this have been long before the public, and, we may say, in force irresistible.



siastical, were united to destroy them, and that the mystical whore of Babylon, (ch. xvii.) was about to be “drunken with their blood.” This they saw, and felt, and loudly proclaimed throughout the western world.<sup>1</sup> And the truth of this application they proved in their own personal perseverance and sufferings; thousands of pious martyrs submitting to the swords and fires of their combined persecutors. “The beast overcame them,” as it was foretold; and not submitting to lose their spiritual life, they sacrificed their temporal existence, and “were slain.” (Ver. 15.)

The elevation of the papal power to its supreme height, grandeur, and iniquity, was the work of time, indeed, of many centuries. What has been said above, is to be referred to the thirteenth century, and to those times immediately preceding and following it, when this usurping hierarchy is generally supposed to have nearly reached the zenith of its strength; when a crusading army, levied originally against the Mahometan infidels, was, by the influence of Pope Innocent III. and under the direction of inquisitors by him appointed, employed against the Albigenes, Waldenses, and other Christians professing and practising their holy religion in

<sup>1</sup> In Bishop Newton's Dissertation on the eleventh chapter, containing the prophecy of the witnesses, the learned prelate has exhibited an useful view of the attempt of the pure primitive Church to preserve its faith, doctrine, and worship through the centuries preceding their almost entire destruction and extirpation, by the conjoined powers civil and ecclesiastical, in the 13th century; and he has supported his statement by numerous appeals to the historians and other writers in those times. The interest which the public have lately taken in the history of the Valdenses or Vaudois, has been the means of producing much additional evidence; and the reader may see it to advantage in the “Compendium of the History of the Vaudois,” lately published by H. D. Acland, Esq. as an introduction to his narration of “the glorious Recovery by the Vaudois of their Valleys.”



its purer forms, throughout the southern parts of France.

The horrors of this bloody persecution—in which a million of Christians are said to have been massacred in the most barbarous manner; their surviving brethren, who escaped the fire and the sword, dispersed miserable beggars through the nations; those who could not flee, forced to bend under the idolatrous yoke, or to be deprived of all the comforts, and even necessities of life, under the privilege of buying and selling;—all these are amply recorded in history, and so recorded, verify most accurately the prophecy contained in verses 15—18 in this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

This is only a small portion of the resemblance exhibited in history between the papal power and the second wild-beast: but it is a prominent portion. The fulfilment may be seen in the history of the thirteenth century, as detailed by Mosheim, and confirmed by the authorities which he has collected. And if the reader should require more information, respecting this and other parts of the prophecy, it may be seen profusely in the works of the most esteemed commentators, in Vitranga, Bengelius, in Mede, Durham, Sir Isaac and Bishop Newton, Daubuz, Lowman, Fraser, and many more modern writers on this subject. With the general result of their labours, the present exposition accords; for I am firmly convinced, that the papal power is a distinguished object of this prophecy. Yet there are some important points of difference between us, declared in my former work, which, on a mature reconsideration, I find no reason to retract.<sup>2</sup>

I. In verse 1, *ἐκ τῆς γῆς* may be translated either *out of the earth*, or *out of the land*. I have preferred

<sup>1</sup> Sismundi's History of the Crusades against the Albigenses, &c.

<sup>2</sup> See page 349, &c. of that publication.

the latter, as opposed to *the sea*; whereas *the earth* in these prophecies is commonly opposed to *the heaven*. In a former passage, I have defended this application of the terms by reference to scripture, and have shown that Ἡ Γῆ, thus opposed to *the sea*, frequently signifies *the holy land*, the people of God, while the Gentiles are spoken of under the term *sea*.<sup>1</sup> Thus this second beast appears to arise from among the professed Christians, who, after the divine rejection of the Jews, have been adopted into their place, and obtained their privileges, (Rom. xi. 18, 19.) and, during the twelve hundred and sixty years, they tread the courts of the Lord's temple, (Gal. iv. 25, 26; and see the note, xi. 1, 2.) This accords with what St. John had before predicted in his epistles, where he describes the growth of antichrist out of the Christians so named, ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξηλθον αλλ, ουκ ησαν ἐξ ἡμῶν. He is a Christian in name, not in verity, and he goes out from among the faithful, and joins the warfare of the persecuting beast against them, and by force or seduction, causes many to apostatise from the pure faith. Thus the spirit of antichrist had appeared in its infantine form even in St. John's days,<sup>2</sup> but in a later period was to be manifested in full growth, as is plainly testified in these apocalyptic prophecies, and amply confirmed by historical events. But the difference is not very great between this exposition, confining the rise of antichrist to the land of the Christians, or the more general one, which extends it to the whole earth, as opposed to the heaven, and adopted by Mede, Vitranga, Bishop Newton, and others. The next article of dissent is of greater importance.

II. The two horns of the second wild beast, or false prophet.

<sup>1</sup> See the notes, ch. viii. v. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 18, 19, 24—26; iv. 2, 3; 2 John 6, 7.

In the interpretation of the symbol of the two horns, or rather of one of them, I have ventured to differ very materially from the opinions commonly received ; and I do so on the following grounds.

A horn in Scripture, even in plain diction, signifies strength or power, (see notes, ch. v. 6 ; and xvii. 12 ; ) and in its prophetical language, supreme or kingly power, (ch. vii. 28, and ch. viii. throughout.) And as the two horns of the ram, in the prophecy of Daniel (ch. viii. 20,) are divinely expounded to prefigure two kings, wielding the power of two nations, in an union springing from the same causes, and directed to the same object, so the two horns of the lamb-like beast will probably be found to be two powers, derived from the same origin, resembling each other in character, and directing their efforts in persecuting the saints, and attempting to eradicate the pure religion of Christ.

The Protestant commentators are generally agreed in supposing, that the prophetical description of the second wild beast is to be seen clearly, and exclusively, in the Roman hierarchy. But to complete this exposition, it has become necessary for them to show, that the two distinct horns of supreme power are perfectly fulfilled in the papal domination, and thus to satisfy the prophecy so decidedly, as to render further inquiry and illustration unnecessary. In attempting this, their ablest interpreters have been greatly divided, and have thus shown the difficulty of accomplishing their common object. Mede supposes the two horns to be exemplified in the power of *binding and loosing*, so extravagantly and unscripturally assumed by the Pope and his clergy. Vitringa prefers the power given to the two orders of Franciscans and Dominicans in the appointment of the Inquisition. Bishop Newton and others think it more apparently verified in the two bodies of the

Romish clergy, the regular and the secular. But these, and such like exhibitions of divided power in the Roman Catholic Church, are only of a minor character, official or ministerial, and completely subservient to the supreme Head, whose unity, indivisibility, and infallibility, are the boasted pre-eminence of their religion.

To those who form their map of the Christian world by the light of history, at the time when the bishops of Rome had made some advance towards the antichristian character, as exemplified in the false prophet, a more extended scene will open itself; and the result may be, that while we acknowledge that the abuse of the papal power amply verifies one horn of the second and ecclesiastical beast, we may find the other as aptly exemplified in a separate apostasy, similar and coeval.

The Christian world, like the political, was early divided into two great portions, the eastern and the western. Of these, the eastern division was originally the most important, *and continued so for some centuries*. It was superior to the other in dignity, being the primeval seat of the sacred religion; pre-eminent also in extent of country and of Christian population.<sup>1</sup> Over this district the Roman pontiff had no jurisdiction or influence, except the little he may at some seasons have acquired by arrogance or art. But do we not acknowledge, does not history relate, the growth of an antichristian corruption in this eastern division of Christendom, gradually opening the way for that tyrannical, persecuting domination, which is the peculiar mark and character of the

<sup>1</sup> The superiority of the eastern division was experienced by the western, when the learned Greeks, escaping from their Mahometan conquerors, brought with them their valuable language and books, and opened new and most important sources of knowledge to the inhabitants of Europe.



two-horned beast? In the patriarchs of Constantinople, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, we see the same worldly ambition, the same ardent endeavours, to extend their hierarchal power, as is exemplified in the bishops of Rome. These two hierarchs having, each in his own district subdued the minor prelates, they at length encountered one another on the confines of their dominions, each prepared to stop the progress and encroachment of the other. Here then began their contest for universal jurisdiction, and the submission of all rival claims; each in his turn possessed, for a time at least, the name of it—the name of œcumenical or universal bishop.<sup>1</sup>

This contest, so notorious in history, induced some of the early commentators to discover, as they imagined, the fulfilment of the two horns in these two equally corrupt, ambitious, ecclesiastical powers, whose unchristian contentions produced at length the entire separation of the two great Christian Churches, the Greek and the Latin. The same exposition is adopted by Daubuz, who, in his commentary on the Apocalypse, has described and shown by historical testimony, the ferocity and antichristian spirit with which this unbecoming warfare was

<sup>1</sup> This ambitious contention had its rise from the times of the emperor Constantine the Great, who added the bishop of his new metropolis to the prelates or patriarchs of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. The two last, not being invested with metropolitan dignity, were obliged to take a lower degree, and to leave the field of contest to their presumptuous brethren. About the year 588, John, patriarch of Constantinople, assumed the envied title. In this he was most furiously opposed by Pope Gregory the Great, who proceeded against him so far as to declare, “that whosoever calleth himself universal bishop, or desireth to be so called, in the pride of his heart, doth forerun Antichrist.” (See Bishop Newton and his authorities in his learned statement of the ancient opinion concerning Antichrist. Dissertation xxii. on the Man of Sin.)



carried on. But yet this fulfilment of the prophecy has not been allowed by more considerate inquiries. The parallel of the two horns, thus explained, runs with fair exactitude for some centuries, but ceases at the time when the patriarch of Constantinople, by the loss of power and population, had no longer the means of opposing his more successful rival, who seems to have entered alone upon the prophetic period of 1260 years assigned for the continued domination of the beasts.

The contest began in the fourth century, and terminated in the seventh, when the Roman pontiff beheld his rival sinking under the extraordinary circumstances of the times, and himself enabled to pursue the objects of his ambition with unwonted success. For observe this extraordinary coincidence : just at the time when this apparent horn in the eastern division of Christianity began to fail, and no longer to fulfil the prophecy, another was seen to spring up suddenly in the same quarter, and completely to occupy the vacant place. The religion of Mahomet, founding its pretensions on the Old and New Testaments, armed with ecclesiastical and secular power, began to apostatise and subdue the east. This seems to be the true eastern horn, for it is probable that we are to date the rise of this, and likewise the western or papal horn, from the same era ; because neither of the rival prelates had before this time arrived at that height of successful ambition which is displayed by the symbols of the beasts in the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse. But both of them had well earned the name and title which they had enviously attributed to each other, “ a precursor of antichrist ;” and this mutual charge by the two great rulers of the Christian Church, seems to amount nearly to a confession, or, at least, an authorized declaration, that antichrist was to be ex-

pected, where history has since placed him, in the apostate Christian Church.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In my former work, upon the authority of archbishop Usher and Dean Prideaux, I ventured to date the rise of the two horns in the year 606, when the impostor Mahomet retired to his cave to broach his superstition in the east, and in the west Pope Boniface the Third received the title of universal bishop from the hands of the tyrant Phocas. Upon further examination, it has appeared to me, that this concession to the Papal see does not stand upon undoubted evidence of history. I willingly recede from it, being decidedly of opinion that no event of a doubtful or inefficient character can be admitted to prove the very important fact of a clear commencement of the 1260 years. The progress of the papal power was slow, steady, and gradual for many centuries, without exhibiting any well-authenticated particular event, promotive of it in such a degree as to establish it as the era from which this prophetic period had its beginning.

Mr. Hallam, in his view of the state of Europe during the middle ages, has presented an able and learned draft of the progress of the Roman ecclesiastical power in those times. After tracing it through many stages, he observes, that “the papal authority had made no decisive progress in France, or perhaps any where, beyond Italy, till the pontificate of Gregory the First;” (the years 590 to 604; vol. ii. p. 299.) and he adds, that “for nearly one hundred and fifty years afterwards, it might even appear that the papal influence was retrograde.” It does not seem to be intended by Divine Providence that we should at present possess the means of determining the commencement of this important period, which may not be disclosed till it approaches nearer to its end.

Some respectable writers have endeavoured to fix upon an early period of its commencement, in the year 533; when an epistle from the emperor Justinian to Pope John the First is appealed to, together with an edict of the same character, to prove, that the emperor did then concede the supreme ecclesiastical dignity to the papal see. And this event is considered as the beginning of the period of years. Mr. Hallam has not noticed this event, which he could not with any propriety have passed over, if he had considered it as promotive, in any great degree, of the papal pre-eminence and power. But it is of much more importance that Gregory the Great, in his contest with his rival in the eastern Church, seems to have been unconscious that he had so powerful an argument in his favour; otherwise he would have told him, “the object you ambitiously pursue cannot be yours; it is already mine, by a grant from your own emperor;” instead of saying what he did say—that “whoso-

In the subsequent centuries, the Mahometan power proceeded rapidly in its victorious career,

ever calleth himself universal bishop, or desireth to be so called, in the pride of his heart doth forerun Antichrist." (See the authorities, which are undoubted, in Bishop Newton's 22d dissertation, on the Man of Sin.)

Gregory was born about eleven years after the event, 544. He was one of the Pope's deacons, and thus intimately connected with the politics of the papal see. His ability in this line occasioned him to be sent as ambassador, or nuncio, to the emperor Tiberius II. at Constantinople, where he would see to advantage the objects of the imperial patriarchs, and the ground upon which they might advance their respective claims to the supremacy. His conduct in regard to these claims, after he became Pope, cannot easily be reconciled with his persuasion, that the emperor Justinian, by a solemn transaction, had acknowledged the Pope to be "the head of all the Churches, and all the holy priests of God." Whether this transaction is truly recorded in history I leave to those who are better qualified, by their pursuits and situation, to examine. It is sufficient for my purpose to have shown, that, whether true or false, it was not used in those times by Roman policy as the means of accomplishing their desired pre-eminence, and consequently is no basis upon which we can found the establishment of Roman power. It produced no solid and lasting effects. Gregory had to contend for it, as his epistles evidently show during his popedom, and by the use of other arguments.

They who have formed the opinion that the commencement of the 1260 years is to be dated from 533, calculate its conclusion to have already taken place in 1792, when the French nation was furiously endeavouring to destroy, throughout the world, all sense of religion and morality. Can we see in these transactions, or in those which have occurred since, in a period of thirty-six years, any likeness to those halcyon days which are promised by sacred prophecy at the close of that eventful period:—when, at the sound of the seventh trumpet, "the mystery of God shall be finished, (ch. x. 7,) and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever?" (Ch. xi. 15.)

But although we may not be able to fix upon any precise point of time, as the commencement of this important period, yet we must plainly perceive, that some seasons of the *hierarchy, gradually aspiring*, are more likely than others to have contained its beginning. For instance: the seventh century, in preference to those preceding. The grant of Phocas is not disproved, though somewhat dimi-

subjugating, to its secular and ecclesiastical dominion, an immense range of nations chiefly inhabited by Christians. It signifies little by whose arms, by what tribes of adventurers, these lamentable devastations were accomplished, whether by the Saracens, the Tartars, or the Turks, since all of these adopted the pernicious doctrines of the great impostor. It is not the political warfare and dominion, but their effects upon the religion and kingdom of Christ, which are the object of Christian prophecy.

In this light we are authorised to contemplate this dreadful apostasy, which uniting the exertions of religious and secular power, severed from the Christian profession more than half its members, whose descendants are still subject to the same yoke of oppression, ignorance, and superstition. And can we suppose, that when the Holy Spirit was imparting to St. John a prophetic view of the papal apostasy, which has measured the same period of time,

nished as an evidence, by the doubts respecting it. And proceeding farther in this century, we read, that in a synod of French and German bishops, held at Franckfort in 642 by Boniface, as legate to Pope Zachary, it was enacted, that as a token of their willing subjection to the see of Rome, all metropolitans should request the pallium at the hands of the pope, and obey his lawful commands. This was the beginning of that entire devotion of the western clergy to the pontiffs which was more firmly secured by the imposition of an oath of fealty accompanying it, in the ninth and succeeding centuries <sup>1</sup> This dominion over the clergy in such important countries, increased and extended to more distant regions, became a most effectual instrument in the hands of the Popes, for arrogating and obtaining their domineering power over the laity and their lawful kings. Such was the progress of ecclesiastical antichristian principles in the western division of Christendom; but in the east, their rise and progress are notorious and indubitable in this century, and the date of them may be properly stated in the year 622, that of the hegira.

<sup>1</sup> Hallam on the Ecclesiastical Power in the Middle Ages; and see his authorities, ch. vii.



and produced corresponding effects in the western regions,—no such prediction should apply, or no part of the prophecy should extend to this apparent counterpart of it, this immense apostasy in the east?

This question did not fail to occur to me when I attempted, without the aid of commentators, the interpretation of this thirteenth chapter of the Apocalypse; and since the symbol of the two horns seemed to imply two supreme powers, which distinctly, each in his own province, should fulfil the corrupt and tyrannical character of the second beast or false prophet, I did not hesitate to apply one of these horns to the Mahometan, and the other to the papal usurpation. Both have attained the object of their pursuit by the acquisition and abuse of secular and ecclesiastical power united, by blasphemy, hypocrisy, and oppression, by lying wonders and seductive arts. Early in the seventh century, both seem to have attained that measure of antichristian character necessary for them to proceed in their iniquitous and destructive course. That course has been pursued by both with the same success through the same centuries; their power began to decline at the same time, and will end, according to this interpretation, at the same period predicted. The horns will sink together with the beast which bears them, as foretold in chap. xix. 20, of this Revelation. We may add, that each of these horns appears equally to illustrate the more ancient prophecies of Scripture which are analogous to this delivered by St. John. The little horn of Daniel came up from the former beast, rising out of the old established civil power, but he “is diverse from the other horns,” not merely secular; “he has eyes, as the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things,” which foretell his seizure of ecclesiastical power, and his claim to divine dignity. Under which symbol we may now recognize the



appearance of the second *ecclesiastical* beast of St. John, as representative of that same power, though not yet divided into the two horns or branches, each of which retain in the apocalyptic prophecy, his likeness so exactly.

We are not to be surprised that this prophecy of Daniel (ch. vii.) should be found to prefigure the same object as the second wild beast of St. John, yet without proceeding to describe his division into two branches. Similar instances are to be seen in the visions of this prophet, where the first prediction is general, and another succeeds to it, containing additional and specific information concerning the same object. The vision of the four beasts is the same with that of the image preceding it, but enlarged by additions under varied symbols. And it is generally remarked by Sir Isaac Newton, that “the visions of Daniel all relate to one another, every following prophecy adding somewhat new to the former.”<sup>1</sup> Hence it will not seem extraordinary that at the distance of time between the predictions of that prophet and those of St. John, he was not empowered to descend to that minuteness of description which characterizes the last and closing prophecies given to the apostle under the New Testament.

This vision of St. John may likewise be compared with the description of the expected antichrist by St. Paul,<sup>2</sup> which appears to be in some respects the commentary of an inspired apostle on the prophecy of Daniel, and yet is equally applicable to both the horns of the second beast of St. John. He describes “an apostasy, in which that man of sin, the son of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Isaac Newton on Daniel, part i. ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4, 9, where observe, that in the Greek the word is θεον, without the article, and θεος, and not ὁ θεος,—a God, not God, or, the God.

perdition, shall be revealed, he who opposeth,<sup>7</sup> and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as a God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is a God; even he whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." This description applies equally to the papal or Mahometan horns; if there be any preponderance, it is in favour of the latter. If the reader should be willing to see a draft of these three prophecies compared together in the words of the Greek, it may be found in the first publication by this author.<sup>1</sup>

These observations may tend to obviate one objection which has been adduced to invalidate the interpretation of the two horns of the lamblike beast, as here offered to the student in prophecy.

Secondly, it has been objected by Dr. Benson and others, against the admission of the Mahometan power as the prophetic antichrist; that Mahomet, the founder of this power, was not originally a Christian; but the objection has been withdrawn or silenced, by the admission, that although not a Christian, he was a leader of a great Christian! apostasy, and founded his religion upon a selection from the doctrines of the Old and New Testaments, accommodating them to the taste of numerous heretical tribes of professed Christians and of Jews, whom he allured by peculiar favours and exemptions. In my former work, all this is proved by historical deduction; and it is also shown, by the testimony of many the most respectable inquirers, that the Mahometan religion, having been so founded, and its practice regulated upon such data, ought to be esteemed a Christian apostasy, or may be considered a Christian heresy. These deductions, at length, would enlarge this part of the present work beyond its proper

dimensions, and cannot be given so effectually in an abstracted form. The reader, therefore, who may desire to satisfy his opinion on this part of the subject, is referred to the original work.<sup>1</sup>

It is stated, as a third objection, that the Mahometan power was at no time seated at Rome. But where is the sacred prophecy, which designates this capital as the residence of the expected antichrist? We look for it in vain in the prophecy of Daniel, or in the further disclosure by St. Paul, or in the apocalyptic vision now under consideration. In the seventeenth chapter indeed of this inspired book, a vision will be presented, in which a woman, mounted on a scarlet-coloured beast, having seven heads and seven horns, is said to be "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." This beyond doubt is Rome; and the whole of the prophetic description is applicable to the papal horn, but not to the Mahometan, as will be shown in the sequel.

Lastly, it has been objected, that Mahomet attempted no miracles—no more did the Roman pontiffs. To such direct and undeniable evidence of a divine commission, neither of these potentates could appeal; nor were they so rash as to expose themselves to so sure a test. Indirectly, indeed, by the artful seizure and mysterious interpretation of occurrences, suited to their purpose, they endeavoured to impose themselves on an ignorant and deluded people, not as performing miracles in their own persons, but as the objects of miraculous interposition.<sup>2</sup> It is

<sup>1</sup> Part iv. sect. 4, p. 365, &c. An afterthought has occasioned this, with some variations, to be inserted as an appendix to the present work.

<sup>2</sup> See 2 Thess. ch. ii. ver. 9, 10, 11, where St. Paul states such pretended miracles to be successful with the apostate Christians, in future times, on account of their pleasure in unrighteousness, and their aversion to the true religion, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."

in this sense, and this only, that the miracles of either the papal or Mahometan Churches can be understood to fulfil the strong language of the prophecy, “making fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of (the) men.” It is “a delusion,” which they, from their love of unrighteousness, are ready and pleased to account miraculous.<sup>1</sup>

And by what other means did the impostor Mahomet establish his religion? His Koran was a pretended miracle, “a lying wonder.” He describes himself ascending to heaven, to receive a part of it, and the remainder to be brought to him by angels;<sup>2</sup> and he asserts his Koran to be a divine composition, a miraculous work, inimitable by man, and he appeals to the world for its vindication as such.<sup>3</sup> What are these but “lying wonders,” pretended

<sup>1</sup> Miracles, in their proper acceptation, are from God only, (John ix. 16, 33.) Such was the fire from heaven, descending at the prayer of the prophet, and attesting his heavenly mission, (1 Kings xviii. 24, &c.) Similar instances of the same miracle had occurred before, (Gen. xv. 17; Lev. ix. 24; 2 Kings i. 10; 2 Chron. vii. 1—3.) The miracles of the false prophet are such in pretence only, “lying wonders and delusions.”

Among the “lying wonders” of the Papal Church, what can be more magnificent than the real body and blood of the Redeemer, revived and reproduced at the prayer of the priest in millions of churches in one day, and every day successively? If the change from bread and wine could be proved to take place, it must be admitted to be a most signal, indisputable, and perpetual miracle. But it is denied, and opposed as such by man’s reason given to him by his Maker, and referring the test of truth to the evidence of his senses, and to the Holy Scriptures, and the testimony of primitive Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> Koran, xcvi.

<sup>3</sup> Do. passim. The style and composition of the Koran are esteemed by the doctors of the mosque to be inimitable, and more miraculous than the act of raising the dead. God alone, they say, could dictate this incomparable performance.—Mill’s Hist. of Mahomedanism.



fire from heaven, to delude and seduce the inhabitants of the earth?

The attentive and candid reader may now be left to determine, whether the two-horned wild beast, after his union with the first or ten-horned beast, and his character and action, be not more amply and appositely fulfilled by the wide display of antichristian enormities in the whole Christian world, than solely in that part of it which we call the papal or western? and whether the two horns are not more completely verified in these two grand divisions of Christian apostasy, than in any exemplification of them which has been hitherto discovered in the papal division only?

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### THE IMAGE.

THIS symbol is pronounced by Vitringa to be the “*Crux Commentatorum*,”—the knotty point, most perplexing and difficult to unfold. Confining his views to the papal apostasy alone, Vitringa supposes the image to predict the Inquisition. But to this interpretation it has been objected, that the Inquisition is not an essential part of Popery. It has been confined, in fact, to a few nations, most submissive to the papal power.

It may be added, that in this prophecy the image is made by the people, not by the false prophet, though at his suggestion; whereas the Inquisition was established by the Popes, in opposition to popular feeling.

To enumerate all the solutions of this enigma which have been proposed, and to canvass their respective merits, would be a work of labour rather than profit. I shall therefore invite my readers to accompany me in an investigation of it, wherein, by examining the



steps as we proceed, he will be able to estimate fairly the degree of our success.

In this case, as in others of most apparent difficulty, I have had recourse to a paraphrastic review of the prophecy, in order to ensure a perfect knowledge of all its parts, and have then proceeded to the records of history, in pursuit of the corresponding events.

1. We have before us two wild beasts; the first of which arose out of the sea, the second out of the land. The former had ten horns and seven heads, and one of his heads wounded, as it were unto death. And he had power given him by the dragon, or satan, which he employed in making war against the professors of pure religion.

2. The second beast, with two horns like a lamb, or the false prophet, exercised all the power of the first beast before him. He was also permitted to deceive the people by lying wonders, false miracles; and thus prevailed on them to worship, not only the first beast whose deadly wound was healed, but also an image of him which he caused them to make.<sup>1</sup>

3. The image being thus made, the false prophet had power to give πνεῦμα, breath or life to it, so that it should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship it should be killed.

4. The image also causeth that persons of every degree and description should be branded with the mark, the name of the beast, or number of his name. And they, who would not submit to this badge of servitude, are deprived of the right of buying and selling, the most essential point in social intercourse.

5. They who have wisdom or understanding, are

<sup>1</sup> In chap. xix. 21, ad fin. the reader will see additional proof of the separation of the two wild beasts in their character and offices, which, compared with ch. xiii. 8, and xiv. 9, will warrant the description of them given in the foregoing pages.

invited to calculate or deliberate upon the number of the beast, that is, the number of his name; and this number is said to be that of a man, and it is 666.

To this view of the prophecy we now proceed to add the following observations, as tending to show a correspondent fulfilment of it in history.

1. It has already been pointed out, that the first beast from the sea is the type of that secular power which has at any time oppressed the true Church; but more especially when, in the hands of the pagan emperors of Rome, it persecuted the primitive Christians. This nefarious power received a wound apparently mortal, when his persecuting power was so apparently annihilated by Constantine the Great, and his Christian successors.<sup>1</sup> There is a marked difference between the worship paid to this beast *before* and *after* the time when the false prophet, the ecclesiastical power, appeared as his minister. The first was general throughout the nations subdued by arbitrary power, *εθαυμασεν*, they were amazed, stricken with wonder and fear; *τις ομοιος τῷ Θηρίῳ*; *τις δυναται πολεμῆσαι μετ' αὐτῷ*.<sup>2</sup> The second was the effect of religious doctrines, enforcing such obedience and worship, by a pretended divine authority, and the power of the sword.

2. The second wild beast, *ἐκ τῆς γῆς*, from the earth or land, has been shown to represent a persecuting *ecclesiastical* power. The first arose from without the Church; the second from within it. How completely, under our present interpretation, he exercised all the power of his predecessor, is too well attested by the history both of Mahomet and his successors, and of the Roman pontiffs. In each case the people were deceived by lying wonders and

<sup>1</sup> See the notes on chap. xiii. 1—10.

<sup>2</sup> Verses 3 and 4.

seeming miracles. In both cases also the union of the secular and ecclesiastical powers was followed by persecutions of the faithful, similar to those inflicted under the tyrannical reign of the first beast. Thus was his wound healed, and his image erected, as an object of the world's foolish idolatry : for it was as a prophet in the east, and as œcumenical bishops, vicegerents of Christ in the West ; that these two horns first introduced their respective apostasies, though they afterwards had recourse to the secular power, to extend their tyrannical dominations.<sup>1</sup>

3. That the following part of the prophecy applies exactly to the image thus interpreted, will at once be seen by a reference to the histories of the Caliphate and of papal Rome. Caliphs and popes spake, and armies obeyed, to the destruction of thousands and tens of thousands of those who refused obedience to them. And what less than worship was the humiliating practice of princes and nobles leading the horses on which these ecclesiastical tyrants were mounted,<sup>2</sup> or the yet more degrading custom of kissing the caliph's sleeve, or the feet of the Roman pontiff.<sup>3</sup>

4. Many of the commentators have shown from history, that it was common in the ancient world for masters of slaves, commanders of soldiers, and the priests of idolatrous worship, to mark their follow-

<sup>1</sup> For these particulars here enumerated, see the notes to chap. xiii. 11—18.

<sup>2</sup> There are many instances of this kind of indignity : but the insolence of the pontiffs to sovereign princes was never carried to greater enormity than that of Gregory VII. to the emperor Henry IV. ; and to this may be added that of Innocent III. to our King John.

<sup>3</sup> The custom at Rome is generally known : that which resembled it in the Mahometan world is thus described. A piece of black velvet, twenty cubits long, used to be suspended from a window in the caliph's palace, which, reaching to the ground, was daily saluted by all the nobles, &c.

ers, and even themselves, with emblems figurative of the objects of their veneration. These marks, consisting frequently of letters or numbers, having sometimes a literal and sometimes an enigmatical meaning, were impressed on the right hand or the forehead.<sup>1</sup> In the instance under consideration, the expression may have been used, according to scriptural custom, figuratively, not literally. Under the Mahometan oppression indeed, there was literally a mark of oppressive distinction between Christians and their favoured fellow-subjects, in the colour of their turban or girdle; nor were the former permitted to ride on horses or even mules, but on asses only, and in the attitude of women.<sup>2</sup> And if the papal power has not inflicted generally such literal mark of distinction on those estranged from her worship, it may be observed, that her marks, in a figurative sense, are constantly applied to her servants. They are called catholics, in contradistinction to heretics; and the tests of the mass, and of baptism, by Romish priests, together with five more ceremonies pronounced sacramental, stamp them of the class to which they belong. One of these, *extreme unction*, they are supposed to carry with them through the grave, as a passport to the gate of heaven.

But it is most to our present purpose to observe, that the interdiction from the natural privilege of

<sup>1</sup> These badges of servitude are of great antiquity. There is allusion to them in Exod. xiii. 9, and Deut. vi. 8. Such a mark was inflicted on the conquered Jews by Ptolemy Philadelphus, (Maccabees.) Irenæus relates, that the Gnostics were accustomed to mark their disciples. The believers in Mahomet, and the infidels, are to be marked respectively, previously to their appearance at the last day. (Sale's Koran, p. 105.) In Hindostan, some casts continue to be marked in the forehead.—*Voyage of F. Paolino da San Bartolomeo*.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon, Hist. Decline and Fall, chap. li.



buying and selling, has been *literally* enforced by the Church of Rome, upon those whom she has denounced heretics, and at those times when she found herself able to support such odious edicts. The council of Lateran, under Pope Alexander III.; the synod of Tours, under the same Pope; and the bull of Pope Martin V. after the council of Constance; and many of the edicts against the Waldenses of Piemont, are instances of the fulfilment of this part of the prophecy. Most of these documents are appealed to by Usher, Mede, Vitranga, Daubuz, &c. and are given in an abstracted form by Bishop Newton.<sup>1</sup>

It appears then that the image was erected as the representative of that tyrannical power which, under the type of the first, or ten-horned beast, had persecuted the people of God under the Old Testament, and the primitive Christians under the gospel dispensation. It has been shown also, that this power so directed, seemed to be extinct, in this its persecuting character, under Constantine the Great, and his Christian successors; but that nevertheless, it gradually re-appeared. It did not re-appear altogether in its primitive shape, as the first wild beast, but in a new form and representation, namely *the image*. For, though the likeness to the original was strongly marked and preserved, yet the manner in which it was made, with the addition of some materials, occasioned an accession of character. It was devised by the ecclesiastical power, which sought

<sup>1</sup> These enormities took place principally in the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when papal encroachments were at their greatest extent. Bishop Taylor, in his valuable work on the liberty of prophesying, has shown the difficulty of supporting such attempts on the natural liberty of man. See also Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. cent. xiii.; and Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hist. vol. v. 72, 138, &c. &c.



and obtained an union with the secular authorities ; and the people, professed Christians, were seduced and deluded by false miracles to erect and worship it.

Added to these was another advantage in the *times*, succeeding to those of the three first centuries, which made the image of the beast more successful in opposing the growth of pure Christianity than his persecuting prototype had been. The Christian world, no longer united by their common sufferings under persecution, divided into sects, and forgetful of Christian unity and forbearance, made their appeal to the sword, in support of their conflicting heresies. The crime at this period most prevalent among the Christians, was that of forsaking the pure word of God for the inventions of men, as aptly described by the prophet ; “ My people have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water.” (Jer. ii. 13.) “ The quibbling philosophy of Greece, mixed with the Eastern, and these with Christian nations, begat that spirit of controversial accuracy and dogmatism, which divided Christianity into a thousand sects, and prepared the way for the Mahometan and papal superstitions.”<sup>1</sup> They might have been aptly addressed in the language of St. Paul, “ O foolish Galatians ! who hath *bewitched* you ? are ye so foolish, having begun in the *Spirit*, are ye now made perfect in the *flesh* ? Stand fast in the *liberty*, wherewith Christ has made us free ; and be not entangled *again* with the yoke of bondage.” (Gal. iii. 1—3, v. 1.) Here was a lesson recorded in the Scriptures, and calculated to restrain the steps of the heretical, had they been disposed to give au-

<sup>1</sup> See Sale’s Koran ; preliminary discourse, pp. 42, 44, 45, 51 ; Sir William Jones, in the Asiatic Researches, vol. i ; Ricaut’s Ottoman Empire ; Prideaux pref. to Life of Mahomet.

dience to it. They sinned in disregarding it; and from inflamed passions or cold indifference to true religion, became the vile instruments of Satan's agents, and proceeded to sanctify and idolise tyrannical usurpations and contemptible superstitions, in opposition to Christian freedom, purity, and peace.

Taking advantage of this turbid and degenerate state of the Church, Mahomet and the popes established their respective apostasies;<sup>1</sup> and thus from the combination of the dragon, or ancient serpent, with the first and second wild beasts, or secular and hierarchal powers, arose that spiritual and temporal despotism, which, under the emblem of *the image*, has inflicted so much calamity on the Christian world.

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### THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST.

THE consideration of this article has been kept back, and assigned to this its present place, because I felt it out of my power to pursue it with the same hope of success as those that have gone before. For I must still confess, as I did in my former work, my inability to solve this enigma. However, for the use of those students who may be inclined to enter upon this investigation, a few preliminary observations may be serviceable.

18. *ωδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν.*] The word *ωδε*, is applied in a similar sense and reference in ch. xiii. 10; xiv. 12. And *σοφία* is used in some passages of Scripture to express that gift of the Holy Spirit, which conveys a more perfect understanding of the mysteries of the gospel. In particular, *δωη ὑμῖν (ὁ Θεός) πνεῦμα σοφίας*

<sup>1</sup> Apertus hic, opertus ille, duo maxima antiqui serpentis organa, quibus usus est in labefactandis Ecclesiis Apostolorum operâ fundatis. Usher. de ecclesiarum successione, p. 18.

και αποκαλυψιας. (Eph. i. 18.) Hence we may collect, not only that we are invited by the present passage to interest ourselves in the development of the mystery contained in it, but also encouraged by other passages to attempt it.

The object of investigation is “the number of the beast,” by the means of calculation. Ψηφος calculus, lapillus; and thus Ψηφιζω, signifies to count, calculate, or sum up. Ψηφιζει την δαπανην, (Luke xiv. 28.) where knowledge of the expenditure is sought for by such computation.

The beast, whose number is to be sought, is, as we have shown before, the first beast, whose image is the object of idolatrous worship. And his number seems to be either identified, or nearly connected with his *mark* (το χαραγμα); and his name, (ver. 17.<sup>1</sup>) This connexion will be seen more clearly by referring to ch. xiv. 11; where the severest punishments are inflicted upon “those who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth *the mark of his name*.” Again, ch. xv. 2, where the faithful servants of Christ are described as having “gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark,<sup>2</sup> and over the number of his name.”

In none of these similar passages is there any mention of the second beast or false prophet, and consequently, they who have sought an explanation of the enigma, by attributing the mysterious number to him, have been led into error.

With respect to the methods of interpretation hitherto employed, the first instance that occurs is

<sup>1</sup> Observe, in this verse, that the first η, (or,) which appears in the received translation, is not to be found in the best MSS., and is expunged by Griesbach.

<sup>2</sup> The χαραγμα, or mark, appears to be the name of the beast, expressed in Greek letters, as used either in their literal or numerical acceptance.

that of Irenæus, who, by the assortment of the letters of the Greek alphabet, used numerically, obtained the names of *Λατρευος*, *Ευανθος* and *Τειραν*.<sup>1</sup> He preferred the first of these, but had little or no reliance upon it. His object must have been the idolatrous Roman or Latin empire. Bishop Newton, and many others among the commentators, have adopted this word as involving the discovery required, applying it to the Latin church and the papal hierarchy.<sup>2</sup>

But this mode of calculation has fallen into discredit, by the fact, resulting from experience, that there is no end to the multitude of names which may be composed by such fabrications; and that not only the antichristian chiefs, but the most eminent of our reformers may be, and have been thus designated by their adversaries.

Archdeacon Wrangham has the merit of displaying in a very small compass, a learned and critical view of many attempts in the ancient languages, and by various modes of calculation, to devise names applicable to the mystery of the number of the beast. The facility with which these adaptations are made, has occasioned an infinite number of them. “Scarcely,” says he, “has a single controversy started up, in which this accommodating

<sup>1</sup> Iren. adv. Hær. v. 30.

<sup>2</sup> The numeral letters are thus assorted by them :

Λ	=	30
Α	=	1
Τ	=	300
Ε	=	5
Ι	=	10
Ν	=	50
Ο	=	70
Σ	=	200
		<hr/>
		666
		<hr/>

number (666) may not be ranged on either side.” And we may add, that none of them afford that satisfactory conviction which attends the perfect discovery of an hidden mystery. There is wanting that flash of illumination, that lively sense of having passed from darkness to light, which so delightfully affects us upon the solution of a well-formed enigma. It may therefore be reasonably doubted, whether the true mode of calculation has yet been discovered.

However, the learned Archdeacon has not yet thought proper to relinquish entirely the mode of computation practised by Irenæus, and has presented us with the word *Αποστατης*, thus acquired. This term will refer equally to the two great apostasies in the East and in the West. But it will be thought too general in its meaning, as is evident from its liability to perversion, by opponents in controversy. The Romanists, for instance, apply this opprobrious term to the Reformers, as *apostates* from their true Catholic Church.



## PART V.

## SECTION I.

*The Lamb on Mount Sion.*

CHAP. xiv. ver. 1—5.

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder : and I heard the voice of harpers, harping with their harps :

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders : and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women ; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile : for they are without fault before the throne of God.

THE twelfth and thirteenth chapters have justly engaged a very large share of our attention, from the conviction of the difficulty and importance of their subject. We shall now be enabled to proceed with less hesitation. The language is less enigmatical, and more assimilated to the usual style of holy Scripture : besides, it is generally allowed that the subject now before us involves the reformation of religion in the sixteenth century, and the continuation of it to our own times, a course of events fully

exposed in history, and easily compared with the symbols presumed to predict it. But, on the other hand, it must be considered, that this is only a part of the great work of reformation. It is the part intermediate between the secession of the pure and persecuted Christians, during the increasing corruptions of the hierarchal Church, and that which must take place in the progress of future events. The early part of this first period is not without its difficulties, from defects in the history expected to illustrate it. But these difficulties are increased, when we look forward to that more extensive part of the Reformation, so wanted, so ardently desired—which is yet to come. Here we have no history, but must depend principally on the general assurances of divine prophecy, and be very sparing of conjecture, which has been proved to be so fallacious in the hands of some ingenious writers. We must proceed with caution, as it was our endeavour in the eleventh chapter, containing the prophecy of the witnesses; separating, as discreetly as we can, the symbols already fulfilled, from those reserved for a future completion. Mede and Vitringa, two very able commentators, have ventured in some instances upon this dubious ground, with more confidence than I have dared to assume, and may be consulted with perhaps some advantage by the curious inquirer.

Ver. 1—4. *The Lamb—on mount Sion, and with him, &c.*] The seventh trumpet had already sounded, and a general view of its blissful effects, in restoring the kingdom to the Messiah and his followers, had been afforded. (Ch. xi. 15.) The conflict is now to be expected: but before the battle takes place, the battle array is to be viewed. The enemies of Christ and of his Church, the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, have been exhibited in the

two last chapters. But “when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him, and the Redeemer shall come to Zion.” (Isa. lix. 19, 20.) During the alarming progress of the antichristian powers, the Christian forces are not idle or unemployed. The vision proceeds to exhibit their efforts to check, and at length finally to subdue, the enemies of the Church. The Lamb,<sup>1</sup> το αρνιον, appears upon Mount Sion, upon the place of true religious service;<sup>2</sup> the site of the heavenly Jerusalem; the seat of the throne of the Messiah. (Ps. ii. 6; Heb. xii. 22; Isa. ii. 23, &c.; xi. 9, 10; lvi. 7; Ezek. xvii. 22, &c.; xx. 40; Micah iv. 1, 2; Luke iii. 5, 6.) He comes attended by his Church; by the hundred and forty-four thousand, who had been sealed as “Israelites indeed.”<sup>3</sup> He comes in the likeness of his suffering state, leading his followers to conquer by suffering,<sup>4</sup> not yet by his vengeance.

This then appears to be the true, persecuted, and suffering Christian Church, which, throughout the reign of the dragon, beast, and false prophet, refuses to worship the image, and receive the mark of the beast. These are *marked* holy unto God; the precious price of Redemption has not been paid for them in vain. (1 Cor. vi. 20.) And “there is joy in heaven,” on beholding their array. The voice of Deity from the throne, awful and sublime,<sup>5</sup> acknowledges them; the heavenly chorus breaks forth into songs of praise and exultation. They sing “a new song,”<sup>6</sup> the song of the Lamb, a song mysterious, unfit for impure and worldly ears (ιτε, βεβηλοι); in which those only can be initiated who are pure and faithful: and the delights of the heavenly harmony

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. v. 6.

<sup>2</sup> See note, ch. viii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> See notes, ch. vii.

<sup>4</sup> Note, ch. ii. 7.

<sup>5</sup> See notes, ch. i. 14; vi. 1.

<sup>6</sup> See note, ch. ii. 17; iii. 12.

are unutterable ; “ none knoweth, but he that receiveth it. (Rev. ii. 17.)

Ver. 4, 5. *These are they who, &c.*] Here follows a description of that pure Church, which alone Christ acknowledges for his own, during the usurpation of antichrist. Ἡ γυνή, signifies generally a married woman ; the crime committed with such is adultery ; which may be taken, in a literal sense, to represent in general, all the defilements of the flesh ; or in a metaphorical sense, a woman is a Church, or congregation of religious persons ;<sup>1</sup> which, keeping itself pure from idolatry, is styled a virgin ; but, defiled with such abomination, is denominated harlot or adulteress. “ They called,” says Hegisippus, “ the Church a *virgin*, when it was not corrupted by vain doctrines.”<sup>2</sup> Every part of this description may be found applied in other places of Scripture :—

1. By Saint Peter ; “ they have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Pet. i. 4.)
2. By our Lord ; they “ follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” that is, “ take up their cross and follow him.” (Matt. x. 38.)
3. By Saint Paul ; are redeemed, “ bought with a price.” (1 Cor. vi. 20.)
4. By Saint James ; “ a kind of first fruits of God’s creatures.” (James i. 18.)

Lastly, “ speaking no deceit,” “ blameless before God.” (1 Pet. ii. 22 ; iii. 10 ; 2 Pet. iii. 4 ; Phil. ii. 15 ; Luke i. 6.) And this description agrees nearly with that of the prophet Zephaniah : “ I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord ; the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth. They shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” (Zeph. iii. 12, 13.)

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. cap. xxvi.

## PART V.

## SECTION II.

*The first Angel proclaims.*

CHAP. xiv. ver. 6, 7.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

The character of the true, faithful Christian Church, having been exhibited, its history now begins to be generally set forth; while solemn warnings, and instructions, and encouragements, most useful to the faithful during the times of the beast, are delivered. And first, an angel, flying in mid-heaven,<sup>1</sup> proclaims the Gospel, as an everlasting rule of faith and of conduct. It has been the endeavour of the antichristian powers to corrupt or secrete this Gospel,<sup>2</sup> which is to lead all nations and languages to the knowledge and worship of the almighty Creator. So the progress of the Reformation seems here to be prefigured, which, from its first dawnings, ever appealed to the everlasting Gospel as the sole rule of faith, and preached the restoration of Gospel worship in opposition to the reigning impurities and superstitions.

Ver. 7. *Judgment.*] See note, ch. xi. 18.

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. viii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Mahomet and his followers have corrupted,—the papal hierarchy have secreted it.



## PART V.

## SECTION III.

*The second Angel proclaims.*

CHAP. xiv. ver. 8.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Another angel follows, proclaiming the fall of “Babylon, that great city,” which had intoxicated, seduced, and corrupted the nations with her impure religion. This city, and her fall, will be more particularly represented in chapters xvii and xviii. It is sufficient in this place to observe, that this is one very formidable horn of the second antichristian beast, the false prophet; the fall of which is here prophetically anticipated, for the comfort and encouragement of the suffering Church, engaged in opposing her. And the progress of the Reformation seems still to be generally described; for the purer Christians, the Albigenses and Valdenses, in the twelfth century, pronounced the church of Rome to be this very “Babylon, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.”<sup>1</sup> From this discovery is to be dated the beginning of her fall.

<sup>1</sup> See Mede's Works, pp. 517, 722, &c. Thuan. Hist. lib. vi. cap. 16. Bishop Newton's Dissert. vol. iii. p. 258, 8vo.

## PART V.

## SECTION IV.

*The third Angel proclaims.*

CHAP. xiv. ver. 9—12.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

A third angel proclaims just and eternal vengeance upon those who “worship the beast;” who knowing their duty and their allegiance to God, sacrifice them to their worldly views and interests. They are threatened with “the wine of the wrath of God;” the wine, which is at first strong of itself, unmixed, (*ακρατον*,) has no diluting liquor put to it to reduce its strength, as was common in the eastern nations of antiquity. But, secondly, it is *κεκερασμενον*, rendered still stronger by the mixture of powerful, intoxicating ingredients. (Compare Isa. li. 17—23; Psal. lxxv. 8.) “The Hebrew idea of which St. John expresses in Greek, with the utmost precision, though with a seeming contradiction in terms, *κεκερασμενον ακρατον*, *merum mixtum*; pure wine made yet stronger by a mixture of powerful

ingredients. In the hand of Jehovah, (saith the Psalmist,) there is a cup, and the wine is turbid; it is full of mixed liquor, and he poureth out of it, (or rather he poureth out of one vessel into another, to mix it perfectly, according to the reading expressed by the ancient versions,) all the ungodly shall wring them out and drink them. The expression in the Septuagint (Psa. lxxv. 8,) *ποτηριον—οινου ἀκρατου πληρες κερασματος*, which in the Chaldee is called a cup of malediction, throws additional light on this passage. (Compare also Psa. xi. 6; lx. 3; Jer. xxv. 15, 16, &c.; Lam. iv. 21; Ezek. xxiii. 32, &c.; Hab. ii. 16; Zech. xii. 2; also Hom. Il. xxii. 527; Odyss. iv. 220.)<sup>1</sup> Such terms were used to express the anger of God, terrible by temporal punishments, but most terrible by those torments beyond the grave, “where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched;” which ideas are also forcibly expressed in the words now before us; “the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever.” Thus the terror of the greater evil is exhibited, to enable Christians to undergo the less with patient courage described in the twelfth verse.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lowth, on Isaiah li.

## PART V.

## SECTION V.

*The blessedness of those who die in the Lord,  
proclaimed.*

CHAP. xiv. ver. 13.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them.

The voices of the angels had pronounced the punishments of those who, for worldly purposes receiving the antichristian mark, deny their Lord. A voice from heaven, from the throne itself, confirms their denunciations, adding thereto this consolation ; that if the fiery trial proceed to its last stage, even to temporal death, this death shall be blessed ; shall introduce the martyr to an eternal freedom from pain and trouble ; his sufferings on earth shall be recompensed with everlasting rest and glory. Their good works have been acceptable to God through the Redeemer, and will not be forgotten in the day of judgment, for they “ follow *with* them : ” for so should be translated *ακολουθει μετ’ αυτων*.

These four proclamation are plain in their meaning, and of easy solution to those who are versed in scriptural language. They seem intended to be so, in order that all Christians may be encouraged in time of trial to preserve their allegiance to their Lord, the Lamb, whose banner is unfolded in this chapter.

## PART V.

## SECTION VI.

*The Vision of the Harvest and of the Vintage.*

CHAP. xiv. ver. 14 to the end.

14 And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat, like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud, thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple, which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

20 And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Times of persecution, such as have been now represented under the antichristian powers, are times when the faith and virtue of Christians are tried by the severest tests. Many are they, "who gladly receive the word, but in time of persecution fall away." Now such methods of God's Providence



separate the good seed from the tares.<sup>1</sup> But the time of harvest and vintage, represented also in the Old Testament, (Jer. li. 33 ; Joel iii. 13 ; Isa. lxiii. 1—7,) is a time not only of separation of the good from the wicked, but also of the final punishment or destruction of the latter, expressed by the act of burning the tares and chaff ; and also by the bloody and furious appearance of him who, stained with the juice of grapes, treadeth the wine-press, (Gen. xlix. 11 ; Psal. lxiii. 1—7 ; Lam. i. 15. *ληνον ἐπατησε*.) The imagery of both harvest and vintage are brought together in the prophecy of Joel ; which seems to give, in a short and abstracted form, the same picture as this passage in the Revelation. “ Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe ; come, get you down, for the press is full, the fats overflow :—for, their wickedness is great,” (Joel iii. 13.) This final vengeance of the Almighty upon his enemies, is evidently not yet accomplished. But such a general view of “ God’s righteous judgments” was proper to accompany the warnings and encouragements delivered in this chapter ; in which is also generally displayed the successful warfare of the Lamb and his followers. “ What particular events are signified by this harvest and vintage, it appears impossible for any man to determine ; time alone can with certainty discover : for, these things are yet in futurity ; only it may be observed, that these two signal judgments will certainly come, as harvest and vintage succeed in their season, and, in the course of Providence the one will precede the other, as, in the course of nature, the harvest is before the vintage ; and the latter will greatly surpass the former, and

<sup>1</sup> Which our Lord and his angels are represented as doing, in Matt. xiii. 41, 42 ; Mark iv. 29 ; where the word *δρεπανον* is also used.

be attended with a more terrible destruction of God's enemies. It is said, ver 20, that the ' blood came even unto the horses' bridles;' which is a strong hyperbolical way of speaking, to express vast slaughter, and effusion of blood; a way of speaking not unknown to the Jews; for the Jerusalem Talmud, describing the woeful slaughter which the Roman emperor Adrian made of the Jews at the destruction of the city of *Bitter*, saith, that *the horses waded in blood up to the nostrils*. Nor are similar examples wanting even in classic authors; for Silius Italicus, speaking of Annibal's descent into Italy, useth the like expression : *the bridles flowing with much blood*."<sup>1</sup>

1 Bishop Newton, Dissert. iii. p. 267, 8vo. edit.

## PART VI.

## SECTION I.

*The Vision preparatory to the Seven Vials.*

CHAP. XV.; and CHAP. XVI. ver. 1.

1 And I saw another sign in heaven great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

5 And after that I looked, and behold the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels, seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Ver. 1. *Another sign in heaven, seven angels, &c.*  
The scene of the vision continues the same, heaven

and earth in view, and the angels, who are the actors passing between both. The present exhibition is preparatory. Such a general representation had preceded the seven seals and the seven trumpets; this precedes the seven vials. We are now in the midst of the warfare carried on by the Church of Christ, under his auspices, to resist the formidable efforts of the combined enemies. It is a silent warfare, operating chiefly in the human heart. But heaven is now seen interposing visibly to repress the pride and arrogance of the antichristian usurpers. And as seven angels, by sounding the alarm with trumpets, had foreshown the several shocks of battle which the Church should sustain from her enemies, so seven angels, by pouring forth seven vials, express the vengeance of the Almighty, poured out on the triumphant worldly powers, checking their career, embittering their success, and finally overwhelming them in destruction.

They are to be accounted, as the word *πληγη* expresses, so many blows or strokes; visitations of divine Providence on unrepentant sinners. Such fell on Pharaoh and the hardened Egyptians, who, persisting in their obstinate opposition, were overwhelmed in the Red Sea. The number seven implies a *complete* visitation.<sup>1</sup> “When I begin, I will also make an end, saith the Lord.” (1 Sam. iii. 12.) So, with the last of these vials, “the wrath of God will be completed.” And it is in allusion to this *completion*, that they are called “the *last* plagues;” for they do not seem to extend to the very last times of *final* judgment, but to end with the beast and false prophet finally and completely subdued; with whose continuance in action, therefore, they seem cotemporary.

<sup>1</sup> Note, ch. i. 4.

Ver. 2. *A sea, glassy, mingled with fire, &c.*] This glassy sea has been already displayed as standing before the throne of God, (ch. iv. 6.) where it was seen to represent the purifying blood of the Redeemer; the price of human redemption, in which alone the vestments can be washed *white*; by which alone the Christian can be presented *pure* before God. But the Redeemer has two characters, conformably to the offices assigned him on earth; the one of meekness, in which he came to *suffer*; the other of exaltation, in which he returns to *reign*, and to pour out vengeance on his enemies. We are now arrived at that point of the prophetic history, in which this vengeance *begins* to be poured out. We therefore see the glassy sea mingled with fire; its waves flashing flame; symbolically expressive of anger and vengeance.<sup>1</sup> Here we see collected, as in an appropriate situation, those who, during the usurpation of antichrist, had contended for the faith; and suffering, had gained that victory, which is only to be acquired “by the *blood* of the Lamb.” (Ch. xii. 11; vii. 13; 1 John v. 4, &c.) The purification of the priests for the service of the earthly temple, was in the brazen sea; these, who are to minister before the God of heaven, are purified by the heavenly sea; by the blood of the Redeemer. And many of them, having poured out their own blood in his cause, and after his example, now begin to enjoy the triumph which was promised them under the fifth seal. (Ch. vi. 9—13, where see the note.) They are now to be “avenged.”

1b. *Of the beast.*] ἐκ τοῦ θηρίου, “not,” says Dr. S. Clarke, *over* the beast, but *from out of the midst of the beast*: for, by this expression is implied, not only

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. viii. 7.



their conquest, but the difficulty of it, by a few persons, adhering steadfastly to the true religion, in the midst of idolatrous and corrupt nations.

Ver. 3. *The Song of Moses.*] These holy sufferers no longer cry under the altar for the delayed vengeance of their just God. (Ch. vi. 9, &c.) The promised time is come (Luke xviii. 8.): they now see, as they express in their song,—their triumphant song, like that of Moses after the destruction of Pharaoh, (Ex. xv.) the great and wonderful works of God, who has led them to victory by sufferings; subduing the proud arm of flesh, and bringing all nations to an acknowledgment of his just and wonderful power.<sup>1</sup> The nations had been early invited to worship in the *name* of Christ; they had forsaken their ancient idolatry, and had come to his courts: but the temple was shut; there was none to teach them the truth as “it is in Jesus.” A great part of the nations, who have been turned from their idols, through the operation either of the Papal or Mahometan religions, do not even now worship in truth. But when the final vengeance upon the beast and false prophet, which is here promised, shall be completed, the temple will be opened, and the nations shall “worship in the beauty of holiness,” “with an holy worship.” This seems to be the reason, why the *nations* are introduced in this song, (v. 4); and for this cause I prefer the reading *ἐθνων*, before that of *αἰωνων*, in this verse. It seems supported also by the best authorities.<sup>2</sup>

Ver. 5. *The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony.*] The holy place, the local habitation of the Almighty, was thus called. (Num. i. 50, 53.) There

<sup>1</sup> Compare Ps. lxxxvi. 8, 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> See also Jer. x. 7.

the cloud and the glory appeared, when the Lord *was wroth* with the congregation. (Num. xvii. 42.)

Ver. 6. *Clothed in pure resplendent linen.*] “The fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” (Ch. xix. 8.) The external habit agrees with the internal purity; the angels have the same kind of raiment as their Lord. (Ch. i. 14.)

Ver. 7. *One of the four living creatures.*] See note, ch. iv. 6. The vials of the wrath of God are given to the angels by one of those ministering spirits nearest the throne; by the cherubim; which implies, that they come immediately from the divine presence.

Ver. 8. *The temple was filled with smoke.*] The presence of God, especially when he is wroth, is commonly represented as such. (Is. vi. 4; Ex. xix. 13, &c.) And at the dedication of the first temple, when the presence of the Lord, “as a cloud, had filled the house of God,” the priests could not stand to minister. (2 Chron. v. 13, 14.)

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## PART VI.

### SECTION II.

#### *The seven Vials poured out.*

CH. xvi. ver. 2, to the end.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth: and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus:

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain.

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they shall see his shame.

16 And he gathered them together into a place, called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne saying, It is done.

18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And there fell upon the men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

To assist us in avoiding the errors of many commentators, in the investigation of this prophecy, it will be useful for us to consider:—First. The form and description of the *vial*, as collected from scriptural authority, with the action of pouring forth from it, and also its contents. Secondly. What description of persons are, in the instance now before us, the objects of this divine vengeance? Thirdly. At what time does the operation of the vials, as here described, begin; and at what period will it probably be closed?

1. The *φιαλη*, or, as we write it, vial, was a basin, bowl, or cup, commonly used in the ancient Church to contain the offering of meal or of incense, standing before the altar of incense for that purpose. It was also used to pour from, as in 1 Sam. x. 1.<sup>1</sup> In these seven vials was deposited neither oil, meal, nor incense, but “*the wrath of God.*” When delivered to the angels, they were “filled with the wrath of God.”<sup>2</sup> All conjecture, by Vitranga and others, whether fire, or any noxious liquor, was in the vials, is therefore needless: “they were full of the wrath of God.”

When the terrible judgments of the offended God descend upon his enemies, they are said in scriptural language to be “poured out upon them.” (See Zeph. iii. 8; and the same metaphor is thus applied

<sup>1</sup> See Daubuz on Rev. v.; and Parkhurst’s Greek Lexicon on the word *φιαλη*.

<sup>2</sup> γεμουσας του θυμου του Θεου. xv. 7; xvi. 1.

by the three greater prophets in numerous instances, and in the book of Psalms throughout.)

2. The objects of the divine vengeance in the passage before us are the enemies of the Lamb and persecutors of his followers. Nothing can be more plain than this, though it has been so frequently mistaken. At the very first appearance of the seven angels, appointed to pour out the vials, songs of holy joy and thanksgiving break forth from the persecuted saints, whose perseverance in their faith and duty, supported by heavenly assistance, has gained to them the victory, knowing “to whom vengeance belongeth, and upon whom it will now fall.” Under this assurance, that the time of retribution is come, they sing their *ἐπὶ νικίῳ*, their triumphant song of victory; and the pouring out of the vials confirms and fulfils, in every part of it, their well-founded expectations. The contents of every vial are seen to fall on the beast, his kingdom, and his followers, either by plain literal expression, or fair implication. It is not upon the race of men, much less upon the pure Christians, as some have imagined, but upon the *antichristian men*, that the vengeance of God is poured out. In the received translation, several instances occur, in which *οἱ ἄνθρωποι* and *τοὺς ἄνθρωπους* are rendered in a general sense *men*, the article is unnoticed, which, being translated, shows that these are *THE men* of a particular description.

3. The pouring out of the vials cannot be dated from an earlier time than when the beast and his followers had succeeded in making war upon the saints, and in obtaining an extensive dominion in the world. It could not be before his rise from the sea in his renovated state, with his deadly wound cured, (ch. xiii. 1—3;) for it is under that reappearance



that he is permitted to make war upon the saints with success, (ch. xiii. 7;) and the vials being of an avenging character, *retaliating* upon the antichristian enemy the sufferings undergone by the faithful servants of Christ, this part of the warfare must necessarily be subsequent to the other. And it seems to begin with the voice of the seventh trumpet when it is declared, that the omnipotent “God has taken to himself his great power and dominion,—that the nations have been wrathful, but that now his wrath is come,” (ch. xi. 15, ad fin.) From which account it seems probable that the vials, the executioners of this wrath, are to be dated from the time of the seventh trumpet which contains them.

Hence these two periods of the trumpets and the vials cannot synchronise in all their parts, as some commentators have imagined; much less can they relate to and predict the same events, as others have preposterously affirmed. In fact, though they both belong to the same antichristian warfare, yet the *time* for the operation of each is *separate* and *distinct*. The symbols under the trumpets represent the first period of the warfare, extending through many centuries, during which the beast and his followers, with his prime agent, the second beast or false prophet, made successful war upon the saints; those under the vials designate the latter period of this contest, when success is no longer permitted to the antichristians, and heavenly vengeance pursues them, through successive defeats and sufferings, to their final overthrow and destruction.

This separation of these two periods will be further confirmed by observing, that all the vials are comprehended in the little book of prophecy, (ch. x.) while all the trumpets, except the seventh and last,

are exhausted before the appearance of that book. The seventh trumpet does indeed appear to give birth to, and to comprehend, all the vials; for, at the sound of it, instantaneously the heavenly chorus proclaims that the success of the antichristian warfare is at an end, for “God has taken to himself his great power and dominion,” (ch. xi. 15.) It is then that the vials of his wrath, hitherto withholden, begin to fall upon his enemies: and these are said to be the seven *last* *πληγαι*, or terrible visitations, on the beast and his followers, “for in them is filled up the wrath of God,” (ch. xvi. 1.)

We may close these preliminary remarks by observing, that, as the symbols under the vials appear to be of a later date—the greater part of them probably not yet fulfilled—we must hesitate in applying them to past events; and, when we acknowledge them to belong to *times future*, we should be diffident in foretelling the *manner* in which they shall be accomplished.

We may, under these restrictions, proceed to investigate the seven vials. And first, as they appear to have a strong resemblance or analogy to the seven trumpets, it may be useful to consider the following parallels:—

## THE SEVEN TRUMPETS.

1. Upon the *land*; hail, fire, and blood; a third of the trees, and all green grass burnt up.
2. Upon the *sea*; a burning mountain; a third part of the sea becomes blood; and the third of the creatures die.
3. Upon the *rivers and springs*; a burning star, wormwood, falls, and many die of the embittered waters.
4. Upon the *sun*, moon, and stars; the third of which is darkened.

## THE SEVEN VIALS.

1. Upon the *land*, afflictive to the worshippers of the beast.
2. Upon the *sea*; as the blood of a dead carcase; every soul dies.
3. Upon the *rivers and springs*, blood; a just judgment and retaliation on the murderers of the saints.
4. Upon the *sun*; the men are scorched with great heat; and blaspheme, and repent not.

The three Woes.

5. The bottomless deep opened, *smoke and darkness*, and scorpion-locusts injure the men unsealed, five months.

6. Four angels, loosed from *Euphrates*, lead the cavalry who slay the third of the men; the rest are unrepentant.

The prophecy of the times of the Gentiles, and of the witnesses, during 1260 days, is opened under this trumpet.

7. The grand conflict of the dragon, beast, and false prophet, with the Lamb and his followers; in the course of which the seven vials are poured out.

5. Upon the throne of the beast, *darkening* his kingdom; they bite their tongues from suffering, blaspheme, and repent not of their works.

6. On the great river *Euphrates*, which is dried up to prepare the way of the eastern kings.

Frogs, spirits of demons, working wonders to gather the kings of the whole world to the battle of the great day.

7. Into the air; "It is done!" an unparalleled earthquake divides the great city into three parts; cities of the nations fall; Babylon remembered; island and mountains are no more; great hail; men continue to blaspheme.

This apparent similarity of the two septenaries will be greatly diminished, when we recollect, that their relative objects are in direct opposition. The trumpets proclaim war and invasion against the pure *Church of Christ*, while her enemies are the objects of the vials. Neither do they relate, as I have already observed, to the same period of time.

The four first vials occupy each of them, so very short a compass; the symbols are so few, and of so general a character, that it will be in vain for us to expect from them much certain and important intelligence.

In the first, poured upon the earth, "a noisome and grievous sore" falls upon the men who are marked as subjects, or slaves, of the beast, and worshippers of his image. Now such persons will be found during all the long dominion of the beast, in great numbers, and in all the countries where his twofold apostasy has prevailed. All this is very indefinite, and seems to give an unbounded licence of interpretation; in which the commentators have not failed to indulge.

At the discharge of the second vial upon the

sea, there comes "blood as of a dead man, and every living soul dies in the sea." This also is capable of a multiplicity of explanations, and has received them in abundance.

The third vial, on the rivers and fountains of water, produces, still more generally, "blood," blood, as the sacred comment in the three following verses supplies, "blood to drink," as a just retribution for the blood of saints poured out by their persecutors. This retaliation, of blood for blood, is very explicit, and may throw light on the preceding vial, but it is still vague and indefinite in point of time, and therefore liable to many constructions, not one of which perhaps may be the true one.

The fourth vial is poured out on the sun, and the effect is, that the men are scorched with great heat, which produceth in them blasphemy against the name of God, but no repentance. And here again the symbol of the burning heat admits of various explanations to be drawn from scripture; and many instances may be pointed out in the history, of nations suffering great afflictions under the divine judgments, and still continuing blasphemous and unrepentant.

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From the latitude permitted in the interpretation of the four first vials, it has necessarily followed that the attempts to discover the fulfilment of the predictions have been numerous and discordant. Vitringa has given us an account of those prevalent in Germany and upon the Continent, and, after rejecting them all, has set up others of his own imagination nearly as objectionable. Among our own able commentators of the two last centuries, the same va-

riety and disagreement prevail.<sup>1</sup> In our own age events have occurred, which have given rise to a new system of interpretation. Numerous attempts have been made to show that the vials are fulfilled in the newly acquired history of the French Revolution and its consequences; but the judicious peruser of these will perhaps think, that the success has not answered to the ardour of discovery. There is, in fact, the same variety and discordance of interpretation, as prevailed among the elder commentators. They accumulate upon the symbols of the four first vials—so simple and so general—more weight of particular interpretation than they can bear. This I esteem to have been a fault common to nearly all the commentators upon this part of the Apocalypse.<sup>2</sup> These symbols ought not to be forced beyond their acknowledged and obvious character of simplicity, and should be considered as requiring an explanation of a general character only. For instance, since in chapter xiv. v. 7, the Almighty God is represented to be the proper object of fear and worship, as having “created the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters;” and as these (with the exception only of the sun instead of the heaven—an important part of the whole—) are the objects of the four vials, may we not conclude that every part of the bestial dominion is to suffer under these inflictions, instead of confining our views to exclusive portions of history, arbitrarily assumed?

This general assurance from sacred prophecy, of the commencing, and continued, and universal punishment of the followers of antichrist, must have been a source of cordial comfort to the faithful and

<sup>1</sup> Mede, Durham, Daubuz, Lowman, Newton, Pyle.

<sup>2</sup> I do not except my own annotations published in 1805.



suffering Christians; and may perhaps have been principally designed for that purpose. If the first vials are to receive a more definite and particular fulfilment, the progress of time will discover.

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### THE FIFTH VIAL.

WE now come to the three last vials; and as these stand opposed to the three last trumpets, they may be expected in like manner to open into a larger field of historical events, and to admit of a more particular explanation: but, at the same time it must be considered, that the farther we advance in the prophetical narration, the more is our path enveloped in the darkening mists of futurity.

The fifth vial is poured upon the seat or throne of the beast; and the effect produced is that his kingdom becomes darkened, (*εσκοτωμενη*,) and the darkness, as in the similar plague of Egypt, was “darkness to be felt,” (Exod. x. 21.); for it brings grievous sufferings upon the subjects, or slaves of the beast, who writhe in torment, blaspheme God, and continue unrepentant, as in the preceding vial.

This is a mighty blow (*πληγη*) upon a monarch, striking upon his seat of power and splendour, at the same time, that it extends misery and torment throughout his dominions. But is this darkness to be taken in a literal sense, like that of Egypt, of which it is said, that “they saw not one another?” or, according to that spiritual sense generally attached to these prophecies? The spiritual sense is certainly to be preferred. At the same time it will be well for us to observe, that these predictions under the vials, *retaliate* upon the antichristians temporal injuries inflicted by them upon the servants of

Christ. Now, what is darkness, but the absence or deprivation of light? And of what nature is the light to which the Christian Scriptures metaphorically and continually refer? Is it not the glorious light of the gospel, opposed to heathen and anti-christian darkness?<sup>1</sup> The superiority of Christian nations, more particularly those of the reformed religion, to those who “walk in darkness and the shadow of death,”<sup>2</sup> is exemplified in all history, and in proportion to the purity of that religion. We may therefore conclude, that in a general sense, this prediction has been fulfilled, and is still fulfilling, by the infliction of many evils upon the followers of the beast, from which the faithful servants of Christ have been and are exempted. But, before we proceed further to enquire after any special fulfilment, it may be necessary to determine more particularly the object on which the vial immediately falls. It is,

### THE THRONE OF THE BEAST.

The throne, together with the great power and authority attached to it, was given to the first beast by the great dragon, that old (ancient) serpent, called the Devil and Satan, (εδωκεν αυτω την δυναμιν αυτου, και τον θρονον αυτου, και εξουσιαν μεγαλην.—Ch. xiii. 2; xii. 9.) It is therefore the seat of *diabolical* artifice and antichristian iniquity, and wheresoever these are arrayed against the kingdom of Christ, there is to be seen a portion of the kingdom of the beast, (ἡ Βασιλεια αυτου, v. 10.); and commensurate with his power

<sup>1</sup> This is so perfectly displayed in the prophecies of the Old, and the writings of the New Testament, most peculiarly so in those of St. John, that it may seem needless to quote from them in support of this assertion.

<sup>2</sup> Is. ix. 2; Matt. iv. 15, 16.

and authority, is his throne and sceptre. It is difficult therefore to fix upon any local and permanent station for the throne of this tyrannical power, which extends “over all kindreds, (tribes,) and tongues, (languages,) and nations, so that all who dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life.” (Ch. xiii. 8.)<sup>1</sup> At some eras of the world, and in some particular places, the spirit and power of tyranny, cruelty and oppression, have been peculiarly predominant. Such may be exemplified in the four successive monarchies foretold by the prophet Daniel, in each of which, during their continuance, the beast may be said to have placed his throne.<sup>2</sup> Each in his turn subdued, oppressed, and persecuted the people of God, but more ferociously than all was the fourth or Roman empire distinguished by its tyrannical persecutions of the holy, innocent, persevering martyrs of the Christian Church. (Dan. vii.) At this period, a throne or seat of the beast is plainly discoverable at *Rome*, the seat of empire, from which the bloody edicts were issued. But this is not that period of the beast which is comprised in the Apocalypse. In these prophecies, he does not appear before he had received his wound, apparently mortal, inflicted upon him by Constantine, in his protection of the Christians, nor for some centuries afterwards, when by the grievous degeneracy of the Christian ministers, his wound was healed. The time during which we are to look for the throne of the apocalyptic beast,

<sup>1</sup> I have felt myself tempted to say, that his throne is some imaginary elevated point, from which, by his ministers' assistance, he may survey, and utter his decrees, in every part of his dominions; something analogous to what is presented in the last vial, *regions of the air*; but we must not go beyond the symbols which are before us. In Eph. ii. v. 2, the arch fiend is styled by St. Paul, “the Prince of the Power of the Air.”

<sup>2</sup> His relation to them may be seen in ch. xiii. 2.

and its local situation, begins with this era, and may probably end with the twelve hundred and sixty years.

After the establishment of the Christian religion by Constantine, and his removal of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople, the throne of the beast was no longer in Rome. Nor can it be shown that any imperial, secular, civil power, extending over the nations, has ever been there seated from that time to this.

The power seated at Rome, has been for many centuries ecclesiastical; surrounded indeed by a small range of secular and kingly jurisdiction,—infinitely too unimportant to justify the title conferred upon this city, THE throne of the beast. With greater truth and propriety it may be called a throne of the second beast, the beast ecclesiastical, the false prophet. Mede has clearly shown this distinction. The first he denominates the *secular*, the second the ecclesiastical wild beast;<sup>1</sup> and yet, in his comment on this passage, he has contended that the throne of this first and secular beast is at *Rome*. And many are the respectable commentators who have either preceded or followed him in this forced interpretation. They have endeavoured to support themselves by referring to the seventeenth chapter, where either the same, or a similar beast, is in action; but here (as I purpose to prove in its proper place) the secular and ecclesiastical powers, though uniting in the same object, are seen perfectly distinct, the beast carrying the triumphant woman, represents, with some limitations, the secular beast, the woman a portion of the ecclesiastical.

Many modern writers have relinquished the application of the fifth vial to Rome, by finding, in more modern history, other seats or thrones of the beast.

<sup>1</sup> Works, p. 505.

Austria has by some been so considered, as continuing the Roman empire; or rather, it should be said, as possessing the remains of the western empire, established by Charlemagne. But the subjects of this Roman empire have been long ago transferred to other governments, and even the name and title of Emperor Cæsarian, Austria has been obliged to relinquish. France, under Louis XIV. was supposed by contemporary writers to be the throne of the beast; and the cruel revocation of the Edict of Nantes, seemed to justify, in some degree, this appropriation. And, in later days, the renunciation of the Christian faith, and rejection of almost all religion, by the prevailing faction in the French Revolution,—their persecuting vengeance and thirst of human blood,—seemed to mark this unhappy country as a seat of bestial power. This, however, was not of long continuance. After a few years of misery thence arising, the legislature proclaimed an ample toleration in religious profession and worship,—not known in that country for a century preceding. This was afterwards adopted by the imperial dictator, and at length settled by a charter from their restored king; a charter grounded upon the basis of civil and religious liberty, and thus delivering the nation from the opprobrium of being accounted the throne of the beast.

What has been now said relates to the Western, the European, or Papal apostasy, which certainly has its share in forming the dominion of the beast. But there is another apostasy, another division of the kingdom of the beast, containing the extensive Mahometan governments in Asia and Africa. The whole must be understood to be subjected to the same throne and sceptre, wherever may be their local situation.

This vial brings darkness upon them; darkness in



religion and moral science, dreadfully prevailing for some centuries after the rise of the beast ; since dissipated in many parts by the light of the Reformation. But it is highly probable that we are still to look forward to the future for the perfect fulfilment of this prophecy, as introductory to the final fall of the beast and his coadjutors, under the seventh vial.

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### THE SIXTH VIAL.

Vitringa has rightly observed, that the prophecy of this vial contains two parts, which should be considered separately : 1. The fall of the contents of the vial on the great river Euphrates, and the consequent exhaustion of its waters, “ that the way of the kings from the rising of the sun<sup>1</sup> may be prepared.” 2. The unclean spirits like frogs, &c. In treating upon the first of these divisions, he enters into a long and able discussion of that extraordinary notion entertained by Brightman and Mede,—and, he might have added, by Durham, and not yet relinquished even in our own times,—that the kings from the rising of the sun are the Jews, either already converted, or, passing the river, to be converted to Christianity. He shows, that the emblem, or figurative description, will by no means admit this interpretation ; and that, from failure of arguments to support it, they are content with resting their conclusion principally upon the observation, that this is the only place in the Apocalypse which can be applied to the conversion of the Jews, which they

<sup>1</sup> Thus it should appear in translation, ἡ ὁδὸς τῶν Βασιλεων, τῶν ἀπο ανατολῶν ἡλίου, *the kings from the risings of the sun, or east*, not the kings *of* the east, as in our received translation.

esteem a necessary part of such a prophecy. This is more than they have any right to affirm; and the arguments on this head may be seen to advantage in Vitringa. To this may be added, that the Jews, converted or unconverted, cannot upon scriptural authority be deemed *kings*; and that both in the book of Daniel and in the Apocalypse, kings are considered as the heads and leaders of nations, sometimes united, at others opposed to the anti-christian powers; and they are in this passage referred to as such. This will be seen more particularly when we come to the seventeenth chapter of this book. The greater part of the Jews are on this side of Euphrates, and require no passage over that river to bring them either as friends or enemies into the west, whether to support or oppose the Christian cause.

Vitringa proceeds to speak of some opinions, advanced by Grotius and others, that kings, converted to Christianity, will come with their armies from the east to help the Christian cause; and he goes so far as to admit that some such prosperous attack may be made upon the king of France, who, in the time of Vitringa, after the expulsion of the Protestants from that kingdom, was esteemed to be the head of the antichristian force in the west. This excellent commentator would have shown more judgment, if he had not permitted the prejudices of his own times to mislead him, a fault condemned by him a few pages before.

But leaving these forced and fanciful interpretations, let us draw near to the prophecy, which though very shortly expressed, contains the following information: 1. The contents of the vial fall upon the great river *Euphrates*; 2. The effect of which is, that the water of the river *is dried up*; and, 3. The object to be obtained by the exhaustion of the

water is, that the *way of the kings* who come from the risings of the sun, *may be prepared*.

1. Euphrates was the general boundary of the ancient Roman empire to the east.<sup>1</sup> It is frequently called in scripture *the great river*. The promise of God to Abraham, of the heritage to be possessed by his posterity is, “the land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,” (Gen. xv. 18.) And afterwards, when their God and King uttered his commands from Horeb, they were ordered to take possession of the land promised, “from the sea side to the *great river Euphrates*,” (Deut. i. 6—9; xi. 21; Josh. i. 3, 4.) This great river was therefore the boundary also of the Israelites to the east, or sun-rising. Beyond it was the empire of the Assyrians; and on this river stood Babylon, its famous capital, which first corrupted, and then subdued and carried away captive the people of God. Isaiah foretells the invasion, which effected this misery, under the figurative symbol of the waters of Euphrates, that is, the king of Assyria and his armies violently overflowing the land of Judæa and the countries beyond, and destroying every thing in their course, (ch. viii. 7.) But in the passage of the prophecy which we are now considering, Euphrates and his king and people, do not act as a desolating flood; his power of that kind is to be annihilated, his water exhausted; so that he no longer presents a barrier to prevent the passage of the troops or tribes of other nations, whether hostile or friendly, to other parts of the world. But, thirdly, for what purpose, with what object in view, is this power exhausted? Answer: “that the way of the kings from the risings of the sun may be prepared.” But of

<sup>1</sup> Vitrिंगa quotes Plutarch, in the Life of Lucullus, as an evidence of this.

what description are the kings and people, dwelling to the east of Euphrates, who may delight to see this barrier, this impediment to their passage, removed? In answering this question, we cannot but look to the personages described in scripture under this denomination, and particularly in the Apocalypse,—kings, the heads and rulers of nations, frequently styled “the kings of the earth,” (Rev. i. 5; vi. 15; xvi. 14; xvii. 2, 18; xix. 19; xxi. 24.)

Some passages in this prophetical book, and also in that of Daniel, seem to confine our view to the ten kingdoms into which the dissolved empire of Rome was divided, and consequently to the kingdoms on this side of Euphrates, in the western world; but these, by the words of the prophecy, are excluded. It is for the *kings from the east* that the passage over Euphrates is prepared.

Beyond this great river, to the east, is an immense extent of nations and tribes, peopled almost wholly with enemies to the Christian name, chiefly with Mahometans and Pagans. Now, to what kings and people can we look, as called to pass the Euphrates from the east, if not to these? They may come either as friends or foes to the Christian cause, we are not informed which; but the event, whatever it may be, will be highly favourable to this heavenly cause, and fall as a stroke of heavenly vengeance upon its enemies, for such is the destination of all the vials. It is possible that the prediction may be literally fulfilled by the march of armies invading the antichristian, Euphrates, like Jordan, and the tongue of the Red Sea being miraculously divided for their passage. But the judicious interpreter of prophecy will not expect such an event. The object to be obtained by the passage is, the promotion of the kingdom of God and his anointed, and the subjection of his enemies; and history will tell us that the



force of armies and crusaders has been vainly employed for such a purpose. “The kingdom of God is within us,” and the hearts and consciences of men must be won before the conquest is obtained. It is therefore in a spiritual sense that we must look forward to the fulfilment of this prophecy, and many others which foretell the universal prevalence and reign of the Christian religion. The pious exertions of individual societies in the promotion of this great object, cannot be too much commended and enforced; but the impediments they have to encounter are immense, and their progress proportionably slow. By this short prophecy, however, we are led to hope and expect that all impediments will be removed, and the passage from eastern Mahometanism and idolatry, to pure and saving faith effected, even by *miraculous interposition*,—if such, in the divine wisdom, shall be deemed necessary.

*The Second Part of the Sixth Vial.*

The commentators are generally agreed, that this part of the prophecy is not yet fulfilled.<sup>1</sup> The method of proceeding with such a prediction should be first to explain the symbolical words in which it is delivered, and then to offer such conjectures upon the purport of it as scriptural analogy and careful consideration may suggest.

Ver. 13. The apostle, in the vision now before him, beholds three unclean spirits, like frogs, coming

<sup>1</sup> There are very few exceptions to this general opinion. Among these we find the respectable names of Grotius and Hammond. We have already shown that these learned men had taken up a strange notion of interpreting the symbols in chapters xiii. xvi. &c. by applying them to the history of the Roman emperors before Constantine the Great. One misconception is apt to introduce another; and they have imagined that the verification of the sixth vial can be seen in the history of the same times.



from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. In the next verse, the nature and character of these spirits is described: "They are spirits of devils (*Δαιμονίων*) working miracles." Evil spirits are permitted in this world to suggest wicked thoughts and actions to the depraved minds of men willing to entertain them. The operation is spiritual, and, to the mortal eye, invisible; but, in the vision, that they may appear of some definite shape, they are said to be like *frogs*; like to that loathsome animal, numbers of which by heavenly command were brought up from the Nile, effecting one of the ten plagues of Egypt, (*Exod. x.*) But these are not frogs, but seem "*like unto*" them. Vitringa takes some pains to show that these evil spirits are *men*; but the corporeal form, here given to them, does not agree with this notion; nor does the object in which they are engaged, which is to seduce the kings of the earth to forsake and oppose the Almighty God, in the battle of the great day, at Armageddon. This is done by the evil spirits themselves, who have a power acknowledged constantly in holy Scripture, and the result of it felt by the human race,—the power of seducing us from our duty by arguments silently addressed to our bad passions, and *formed frequently* upon false representations and promises. In the history of king Ahab, we have a lively picture of a vision, which may be useful in directing us to the interpretation of this. He is seduced by the false promises of "*an evil spirit*" to go to battle and to victory, but he goes to his destruction, (*1 Kings, ch. xxii.*) The evil spirits in the vision now before us are permitted to perform apparent miracles. To what use and extent this power is given, may be seen by recurring to a similar passage in *ch. xiii. 14*, and comparing both with St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy (*ch. iv. 1.*) where he describes a future

apostasy in the Church, to arise from professed Christians “giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils,” (προσεχοντες πνευμασι πλανοις και διδασκαλαις δαιμονιων. In this prophecy of the Apocalypse, we have the same “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils,” and coming from *the mouths* of the three great leaders of anti-christianity,—the arch-fiend himself, the beast invested with his power; and the false prophet, the artful promoter of their reign—we may fairly conjecture, that the kings of the earth are to be led to their own destruction by similar means.

Of these three fathers and producers of the three evil spirits, the first is the author of all wickedness; the second, under his direction, is the inflicter of all political misery—of tyranny, injustice, oppression, slavery, and cruelty, under every form of government, whether despotic or republican, and at all times of the world. The third is the hypocritical arch-minister of religion, which he first corrupts and debases, and then derives from it a sanction for all the wickedness devised and perpetrated by himself and his coadjutors.

By the three evil spirits thus produced and instructed, the kings and nations of the earth are gathered together to the great conflict of Armageddon, which signifies the mountain of destruction.<sup>1</sup>

This is the only vision in the Apocalypse in which I have been able to discern any probable prediction of the French revolution; and I noted it as such in my former publication. It began with a torrent of violence and wickedness, threatening to overturn all

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Newton, as collected from the elder commentators. The bishop has justly remarked, that our received translation is faulty in this passage: “HE gathered them together” should be rendered “THEY gathered them together;” for it is the work of the evil spirits, the verb singular (συνηγαγεν) answering to the neuter plural ακαθαρτα πνευματα.

that was good in religion, morals, and settled government, throughout the world. The evil spirits appear to have been at work upon this project for some time previous to the irruption. But the execution of the plan, in the hands of men, failed to effect the object of it. The religious persecution fell, not upon the professors of the pure Christian faith, but upon their enemies, the ministers of the papal hierarchy. The kings, unwilling agents in this cause, were not *seduced*, but *forced* to bear their part in it. The contest, after a time, became wholly political, and at length ended in the settlement both of religion and civil government throughout the nations of Europe, similar to that in which they had previously stood. It has passed by, leaving us to look forward to some more complete fulfilment of the prophecy, when the kings shall be gathered together by the seducing spirits to the great battle.

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### THE SEVENTH VIAL.

This vial is poured out upon the air; upon that element which was considered in ancient times as pervading or enveloping all the other divisions of the world; and, in this case, of the antichristian world, on which the preceding vials had been discharged,—the land, sea, rivers, and heavenly luminaries,—and consequently it smites them all. It is the region of the air, of which Satan, as Mede observes, is denominated the prince, (Eph. ii. 2.) The antichristian powers are therefore attacked in their strongest hold, and in every part. The discharge of this vial is accompanied with a voice from the throne in heaven, proclaiming, by the emphatic expression, γεγρονε, *it is done*, the completion of the promise, in ch. x.

that at the sound of this trumpet “the mystery of God should be finished.” It produces a great and unparalleled earthquake; the great city is divided into three parts; the cities of the nations fall, great Babylon is peculiarly visited and afflicted; the islands flee away; the mountains are no longer to be seen; hail-stones of immense size fall from heaven upon the men, who blaspheme God from their sufferings.

These inflictions are symbolical, and are to be explained in a spiritual sense.<sup>1</sup> They fall upon the enemies of Christ’s holy religion. The great city appears to be the same as mentioned in ch. xi. containing “many people, kindreds or tribes, tongues and nations,” rejoicing over the death of the witnesses. These are *the* men who, thus grievously stricken, blaspheme.

It has been the opinion of many commentators, that the earthquakes, with their attendant commotions, as described under the sixth seal, the sixth trumpet, and this last vial, all belong to the same future history, and are to be considered as synchronical. In my former work I was led to adopt that opinion generally, but with some reservations; but my review of these prophecies has occasioned me to retract it.<sup>2</sup>

In my comment upon the sixth seal, (ch. vi. 12, to the end, and ch. vii.) I have endeavoured to show, by comparison of this earthquake with many others of the same character in holy Scripture, that the time for its perfect fulfilment is that of the great and final day of judgment. Such a completion of it was to be expected under the seals, which exhibit a

<sup>1</sup> See the notes in chap. vi. and viii.

<sup>2</sup> Earthquake of the sixth seal, ch. vi. 12, &c.

————— of the sixth trumpet, ch. xi. 13. These may be compared with those under our present consideration.



rapid sketch of the fortunes of the Christian Church from the beginning to the end. The awful history is told in a few symbols, easy to be interpreted; the heavenly lights are disfigured and extinguished; the mountains and islands removed out of their places, men of all denominations strive to hide themselves from the face of him sitting upon the throne and of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who can stand? Here, as in the other two earthquakes, there is no dividing or falling of particular cities, no remnant of the men left, either to glorify God or blaspheme him; the catastrophe is universal and final.

The earthquake under the sixth *trumpet*, (ch. xi. 14.) is connected immediately with the time of the witnesses, their death and resurrection, and is dated "in that same hour." It may perhaps have been fulfilled, partially at least, in the commotions of the Reformation. Yet a part of the prophecy, or the whole of it, may extend to some future times, but probably not to the great final day of judgment. The heavenly bodies and the earth are not swept away as under the earthquake of the sixth seal: some inhabitants remain, and fear God, and glorify him. Add to this, that being represented under the second woe, and another and third woe being to succeed, it seems on that account not intended to reach to the time of the end.

The earthquake under the seventh vial, which has employed our latest attention, is of the same character in this respect. The wrath of God falls upon particular objects, the great city, the cities of the nations, great Babylon; and a remnant of the sufferers is left, who are unrepentant and blaspheme. Yet there is one particular circumstance, in which this earthquake agrees with that of the sixth seal; in both of these the mountains and islands are moved



out of their places. The mountains are places of refuge and resistance for a routed army; the islands afford hope of safety from their surrounding seas. In a spiritual sense, the mountains are considered as the strong holds of antichristian idolatry. The islands or isles of the sea represent the heathen nations of the western world. In either sense, this part of the prophecy may be fulfilled before the total destruction of the globe.

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## PART VI.

### SECTION III.

#### *The great Harlot, or Babylon.*

CHAP. xvii. ver. 1—18.

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication;

5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11 And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and king of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

To collect and state all the various opinions of the commentators on this chapter, with the arguments by which they are supported, would be a task almost endless, and much too extensive for the object of this publication. In order to give the student a simple and clear notion of the interpretation of it, I purpose to analyse the contents under their prominent parts or divisions, and collecting the results of these separately, apply them afterwards by compa-

rison to illustrate each other, and thus produce an accordant whole. In endeavouring to effect this, we shall keep in view the rules of interpretation laid down in the prefatory introduction, relying principally upon the comparison of similar passages of Scripture, and taking advantage, at the same time, of such observations by the commentators, as seem to afford the best light upon the subject.

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IN the first place, we may observe two personages in this chapter, who are distinct from the scenery of the vision. 1. The angel, who, by divine appointment, exhibits the scenery, and comments upon it by way of explanation. 2. The apostle, who is first the spectator, and afterwards the recording prophet, of what takes place in the vision.

1. The angel, we are told, (ver. 1,) is one of the seven, to whom the vials were committed; whence is justly concluded, that the vision now to be exhibited, has reference to the vials, that is, “to the wrath of God,” poured out upon his enemies. And by recurring to the seventh vial, we see this punishment falling upon “the great city, and the cities of the nations;” and that “*great Babylon* is to be remembered, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” (Ch. xvi. 19.) Now, as it appears in verse the fifth of this chapter, that the woman here exhibited is “*the great Babylon*,” we must necessarily expect, that this great city, or some other representing her symbolically, is a principal subject of this vision. And accordingly, it will be seen, as Vitranga has observed, that her description and character are fully manifested in this chapter, and that the extreme of her sufferings, the effect of the seventh vial, is narrated in the eighteenth, and part of the nineteenth chapters following.

2. The apostle and prophet St. John, is now removed from the station, whence he had witnessed the arrangement and effusion of the vials, to the wilderness, where this additional vision is to be seen. The removal is effected by the angel, *ἐν αἰνυγματι*, in the Spirit. So, St. Paul was caught up to heaven, to behold visions, not sensible whether it was in the body or out of the body; and in some such manner the apostle himself had been removed from scene to scene. (2 Cor. xii. 2; Rev. i. 10; iv. 2.)

We now proceed to consider the character of the *actors* in the scene of this vision. 1. The woman. 2. The wild beast. 3. The kings.

1. The woman, who is now seen in the wilderness, may be compared or contrasted with the woman of the 12th chapter, who fled into the wilderness to escape the pursuit of the dragon; and it seems to be with the view of calling this woman to our recollection, that the wilderness is made the scene of the present vision.

In the notes at the beginning of the twelfth chapter, it will be seen, that this celestial woman represents the Church of Christ in its primitive and purer days; as does the worldly woman now before us, in her degenerate and impure times.<sup>1</sup> The first has

<sup>1</sup> In the note, chap. xii. ver. 1, are references to Scripture, showing that she is a church as well as a city. And she is seen again in chap. xxi, the heavenly church, “the New Jerusalem, prepared as a bride for her husband the Lamb:” and who is the bride of the Lamb, but his pure church? St. Paul speaks of this relation as a *mystery*, but so plainly, that no one versed in the writings of the Prophets in the Old Testament, can doubt this conjugal relationship. The Apocalypse is of later date, and relates this holy connexion in terms of easy solution. The heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, has her foundation on the twelve apostles of the Lamb: contrasted with this, stands the harlot city,—on the seven heads of the beast, his mountains of worldly power and vanity,—the church which seduces and intoxicates the kings and nations, and is herself intoxicated with the blood of the saints.



received her vesture and ornaments from heaven, the celestial luminaries being employed to shed upon her a pure and heavenly lustre. She is far above worldly impurities, an object of wonder and delight to pious men and angels, and of envy, hatred, and persecution to the enemies of the Lamb, to the dragon, the arch fiend himself, whose utmost efforts are exerted to destroy her. The second is arrayed in the most costly attire and gorgeous decoration that worldly rank and riches can procure, and which she has procured, by her influence over the beast, the depository of the dragon's worldly power and greatness. (Ch. xiii. 4, 5.) Her dress and demeanour are meretricious, and she proves to be "*the great harlot*," by name "*Babylon*, the mother of harlots, and of the abominations of the earth." It is a name *mysterious*, as the word *Μυστηριον*, written over this her title, imports. That which the ancient Babylon was to the nations around her, and more particularly to the people of God,—their corrupter and ferocious subduer,—such has been the more recent Babylon to the nations of her time, and to the Christian Church.

She is seated *figuratively*, as her prototype was *literally*, "on many waters;" which the angel explains to be peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." (Ver. 15.) These, together with their kings, she inflames, seduces, and corrupts by the wine of her golden cup.<sup>1</sup> It is called "the wine of

<sup>1</sup> This is a metaphorical expression, frequent in Scripture, representing by the contents of the cup, the portion or lot of good or evil, which falls to him who drinks it. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup," says the Psalmist, (Ps. xvi. 5.) "Thou, O Lord, shalt maintain my lot." And the perfect pattern of pious submission, prays for a moment, that the cup containing his bitter lot, "might pass from him." (Matth. xxvi. 39.) Instances of punishment inflicted by the drinking of the cup of the Lord's wrath may be seen in Psalms lxxv. 8; xi. 6; Is. li. 17, 22; Jer. xxv. through-



her fornication ;” for she is the “*great harlot*,” and it is by inflammatory enticements that she seduces the kings and their nations to sin, the sin of apostasy, by forsaking their God and his pure and *saving* religion, to follow the seducer in all her abominations of corrupt faith and practice.<sup>1</sup>

But, where are we to look for this corrupt city or church, denominated the great Babylon ? No one versed in the prophetic language of Scripture, and in the ancient history of nations, will think of applying the name, character, and fate of the Babylon in the Apocalypse, to the Babylon of antiquity, as having fulfilled the prophecy in its *literal sense*. This Babylon had fallen into nothing long before the apocalyptic visions were seen, and her fall had fully verified the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning her.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, commentators of all ages have looked to a typical fulfilment of these later predictions ; and, finding it declared that this representative of ancient

out ; and li. 7. The same figure of speech has been used also by the classical writers of antiquity, and in the apologue, entitled *Talanta Cebetis*, a beautiful woman, whose name is *Deceit*, offers her cup to the young and incautious, tempting them to destructive pleasures.

<sup>1</sup> The figurative use of the terms *woman* and *harlot*, &c. may be seen at large exhibited with learned diligence, not only in relation to the prophets, but to many classical authors, in Daubuz’s Symbolical Dictionary, prefixed to his exposition of the Apocalypse.—See art. *Woman*, *City*, and *Whore*.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Newton, in his Dissertation on the elder Prophecies, has shown from the testimonies of Herodotus and Xenophon, that the city of Babylon, with its vast empire, fell into the hands of Cyrus and the Persians, 539 years before Christ ; and he has traced the decline of that city, after the loss of empire, as foretold by the prophets, and narrated by succeeding historians, to the time of Pausanias, soon after the publication of the Apocalypse, when, as this author relates, there was nothing left of this greatest of cities but her wall. The wall was kept up for a time, as enclosing a hunting park for the kings of Persia.—Dissertation X. on the *Prophecies concerning Babylon*.

Babylon is “seated on seven mountains,” and “is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth,” they have been led, almost universally, to turn their thoughts to *Rome*, to the great city, which at the time when the prediction was delivered, was the seat of empire over the civilized portions of the earth.<sup>1</sup>

But, whether the prophecy has been fulfilled in Rome ancient and pagan, or in the apostate Christian Rome, has been a subject of enquiry and contention.<sup>2</sup>

Grotius, followed by Hammond, and led by the system of error taken up in his notes on chapter xiii. has declared for the former opinion, which has been adopted also by the Romanists, for obvious reasons; but the times of *imperial* Rome exhibit no such dominant power as is symbolised by the woman riding upon the beast. In Rome, so long as the imperial government continued, there was no splendid triumphant church, intoxicated with her worldly glory, and seducing the kings and inhabitants of the earth. “Ancient Rome,” says Bishop Newton, “does not answer to the character; for she ruled more with *the rod of iron*, than with *the wine of her fornication*. What and where were the kings whom she courted and debauched to her communion? What and where the people, whom she inveigled and intoxicated with her idolatry? Her ambition was to extend her empire, not her religion. She permitted the conquered nations to continue in the

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. c. 13. Babylon, apud Joannem nostrum, Romanæ urbis figura est, proinde et magnæ, et regno superbæ, et sanctorum Debellatricis. Tertull. adv. Jud. p. 217. The writers of note in the Roman Catholic Church are agreed that Babylon is Rome. See Bishop Newton’s Preface to the 17th chapter, and the note there, with quotations.

<sup>2</sup> An pagana vetus, aut pseudo-Christiana adultera?

Vitringa.

religion of their ancestors, and to worship their own gods after their own rituals.”<sup>1</sup>

The difficulties attending the attempts to show that the symbols of the great harlot were verified in ancient imperial Rome, are so insurmountable, that some writers of the Roman Catholic persuasion, declining the attempt, have contented themselves with asserting, that the fulfilment of the prophecy has not yet taken place. But this method of avoiding a question, which they were not able to solve, could not be acceptable to Bossuet, the ingenious and eloquent Bishop of Meaux, who, in refutation of the Protestant interpretation, has produced an argument to prove beyond doubt, as he asserts, that Christian Rome cannot justly be accounted the great harlot of the Apocalypse.

“The woman,” says he, “must of necessity represent Pagan, not Christian Rome; for, to accord with the former, she is properly named an *harlot*, but to represent the latter, she should have been called a faithless spouse, an adulteress.”<sup>2</sup>

The appeal in this case, is to scriptural authority; and if it can be shown, that in the usage of prophetic allegory, an apostate, adulterous, and idolatrous nation, city, or church, is frequently denominated an *harlot*, and that the sin of such apostasy is called *fornication*, this will go a great way to justify the application of these terms to the city and church of Rome, supposing, as the bishop for the sake of argument seems to allow, that, if guilty of the crime, Rome would have deserved the opprobrious name of *adulteress*.

The prophetic book of Isaiah, opens with an

<sup>1</sup> Dissertation on ch. xvii. 1—6.

<sup>2</sup> L'Apocalypse avec une Explication, par Messire, J. B. Bossuet, Evêque de Meaux. See also Bishop Hurd's Sermons at the Warburton Lecture.

animated address to the kingdom of Judah, and its capital city Jerusalem; in which, after describing their sinfulness and apostasy,—“a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupted; *they have forsaken the Lord*; like to Sodom, like unto Gomorrha,” the prophet indignantly exclaims, (ver. 21,) “How is the faithful city become *an harlot*?”

In the same spirit, and with the same object in view, is the similar remonstrance of the prophet *Jeremiah*, accusing this sinful nation of *forsaking their God*, and “upon every high hill, and under every green tree, playing the *harlot*,” (ch. ii. 20.); and the same words are again repeated, (ch. iii. 6.) It is impossible to read the whole of this chapter without perceiving, that in the expression of the prophet, dictated by the Holy Spirit, the two sister kingdoms and churches of Judah and Israel are convicted of apostasy, in forsaking their God; and of adultery with idols; and Israel is described as being put away by a bill of divorce, (ver. 8,) for this very cause; and yet the crime is denominated *whoredom*, and the offending sisters are styled *harlots*.

By the prophet *Ezekiel*, this apostasy and corrupt communication with the idolatrous nations is described at length in an allegory, wherein the origin of the Jews, under the name of Jerusalem, a forlorn female, is figuratively told: her birth and nakedness are described; her adoption by the great God; her happy estate of matrimony, under his protection; her sins by defection and idolatry, as a wife that committeth adultery, “that taketh strangers instead of her husband;” yet, she is addressed in these words preceding her threatened punishment, “Wherefore, *O harlot*! hear the word of the Lord.” (Ezek. xvi.; see Rev. ii. 20—24, and the notes.)

After having cited these instances from the three great prophets, the scriptural application of the term harlot to apostate and adulterous cities and churches, —to churches which possessed so undeniably the high privilege of matrimonial right, to which the Roman church advances her claim,—it may be thought needless to produce more. But it will be useful to observe, that in the New Testament as well as in the Old, instances occur where adultery is expressed by the *πορνεία*, as in Math. v. 32. xix. 9.

It is therefore evident, that the city or church of Rome, by the analogy of prophetic Scripture, is not exempt from the term *harlot*, although she may plead truly that she has been a wife, even the espoused of God; for such undoubtedly were the sister cities, or churches of Jerusalem and Samaria, who are denominated harlots, guilty of fornication, after their adultery and apostasy from their Lord.

So far, in answer to the objection of Bishop Bossuet; and, if there remains any difficulty upon the question, it may be removed, by enquiring what may have been the probable cause which has led the Holy Spirit to use the terms harlot and fornication in those instances, in preference to adultery and adulteress.

It may be attributed, perhaps, in some measure, to this consideration, that a wife may become an adulteress by one single act of frailty, while the harlot, persisting in her shameful trade, and being employed in deceiving, seducing, and ruining many associates, answers best to the character of the profligate, corruptive church which is here personified. But, a more complete and effective reason may be assigned by reverting to the language of the Holy Scriptures, in the allegories we have been considering. When these espoused churches forsake their God to follow worldly seductions, he disowns them:



They are no longer esteemed *married*; they are considered as “*put away*,” by that great Being, who had conferred upon them the high title of spouse. In the language of Scripture, he has “*given them a bill of divorce*.” If the Holy Spirit were to call their crime *adultery*, they might appear to be continued in the marriage covenant, and to be owned and honoured beyond their deserts. (Is. l. 1; see Jer. iii. 8, 14, 20; Ezek. xvi. 8, 32, 20; and compare Deut. xxiv. 1; Mark x. 4.)

We may collect from what has been said, that the prophetical history of the woman may be divided into three parts: in the first of these she perfectly resembled the heavenly woman or church described in chapter twelve. In the second, she declined gradually from this her native and proper character; and, pursuing worldly objects, corrupted herself by her communication with the Pagan nations, which she partially converted, and began to assist the beast in oppressing the true followers of the Lamb; till at length, having completed her apostasy, she appears in the meretricious character exhibited in this vision. It is the description of her in her high zenith of worldly power and wickedness. During the dark centuries, she was successfully busied in increasing her influence and dominion, by “doctrines of demons and pretended miracles;” in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries she wallowed in the blood of the saints, and was thus qualified to appear as the vision has represented her.

2. The wild beast who carries the great harlot.

The means of forming a right interpretation of this symbolical appearance, will be obtained by comparing him with the beast of the thirteenth chapter. The resemblance is strong, but there are some important points of difference. A comparison of the two beasts, drawn out at length, may be seen in my former

work.<sup>1</sup> It will be sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that in the following particulars they agree. Both the beasts arise from the sea;<sup>2</sup> have the same number of heads and of horns; are full of blasphemy; and become a wonder to the inhabitants of the earth: both war against the Lamb, and are to be finally subdued and destroyed by him.

The points in which they differ are, that—

The BEAST, of Chap. xiii.

In addition to the description in which they both agree, has these peculiarities: "He is like unto a leopard,"—"his feet are those of a bear,"—"his mouth as the mouth of a lion." These are the three first beasts in the prophecy of Daniel, (ch. vii. 2.); and by divine interpretation, (v. 17, 23.) represent three kings or kingdoms; namely, the Assyrian, Medo-Persian, and Grecian; the territories of which are now, and have long been in the possession of the Mahometan powers.

2. This beast is mortally wounded, and his deadly wound is healed. He becomes an object of wonder and worship to the inhabitants of the earth, whose names are not written in the book of life.

<sup>1</sup> Part VI. sect. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ἀβυσσος*, in ch. xvii. which is the name given to the sea, by St. Luke, ch. viii. 31.

<sup>3</sup> These two enigmatical passages may be designed to carry the same meaning, as I have endeavoured to show in my former publication: but the expression of them being different, requires them to be contrasted. In abler hands they may yet be proved to have each a different meaning, and of much importance to the elucidation of the character of both beasts. In the mean time, the admiration of the inhabitants of the earth, on both occasions, being expressed in nearly the same words, may give reason to expect that the cause and event are similar, if not the same. In history, from the date of the Apocalypse, for many centuries, there seems to be only one event,—the empire becoming Christian under Constantine,—which inflicted a mortal wound upon the secular persecuting beast. Or, to turn to the contrasted enigma of the seventeenth chapter,—when can we affirm that the beast was, in any sense, out of existence, and yet in existence, unless when the powers by which

The BEAST, of Chap. xvii.

Has no such resemblance to the three first monarchies; and therefore, under this form, must be excluded generally from agency in the territories occupied by them. He is like the fourth beast only, the fourth monarchy of Daniel, the Roman empire; and to this his agency is confined; and to the ten kings, which, both in the prophecy of Daniel, and of the Apocalypse, belong to the Roman beast.

2. "He was, and is not." An object of wonder to the inhabitants of the earth, not written in the book of life, when they behold the beast that was, is not, although he is, or shall be.<sup>3</sup>

3. Ten horns belong to this beast, and they are crowned, but not referred to in particular, as kings. Also seven heads, on one of which he receives the wound apparently mortal, above mentioned.

4. There is a time or season allotted to this beast, forty-two months. <sup>1</sup>

5. This beast is followed by a second beast, the false prophet, who works apparent (false) miracles, to make him, and his image or statue, an object of worship to the earth, and all that dwell therein, of every description.

3. This beast has also ten horns, which are said expressly to be ten kings. These perform a very active part in the drama; and by comparing them with the ten horns or kings in Daniel (vii. 7, 8, 24,) they are found to belong to the fourth or *Roman empire*, divided into the ten kingdoms. This beast is described as having likewise seven *heads*, which are said to be, first, seven mountains on which the woman is seated, the woman of *Rome*; and, secondly, to have another interpretation, to be seven *kings* in succession, and these are generally explained to be *Roman*.

4. No such time is in this instance allotted. And indeed this beast does not appear in the early times of the forty-two months, nor perhaps till nearly one half of them had expired. His appearance in this form, carrying the harlot, cannot be dated sooner than when she had begun to wallow in the blood of the saints, and was riding triumphantly in plenitude of power. <sup>2</sup>

5. This beast has a woman, a gaudy harlot, who, seated upon him, directs his course, and is actively employed in seducing the kings and nations to apostasy and idolatry. The woman is almost universally allowed to be *Roman*.

From this comparison it appears, that although the beasts of these two chapters may be accounted the same, namely, that secular power, which has at all times persecuted the saints, yet, as the one exhibited in the thirteenth chapter, having dominion over the east and the west,—over the territories of all the four ancient monarchies,—he is limited to the season of forty-two months, or 1260 years. But as he appears in the seventeenth chapter, he is under stricter limitations. His time is considerably less,

alone he existed, were annihilated by Constantine; but, to the wonder and admiration of the world, restored with terrible effect under the sanction of a corrupted religion?

<sup>1</sup> Or 1260 years. See the notes on ch. xiii. 1—11.

<sup>2</sup> Centuries 12 to 15.

and in territory he is confined to the fourth monarchy, chiefly in the western world—to the remains of the Roman empire, after it had been divided to her ten kings. Thus the woman, and the beast under her, accord exactly, in being both entirely *Roman*.

### 3. THE KINGS.

In this vision there are two sorts of kings, numerically distinguished from each other. In the one instance they are seven, in the other ten.

1. The general character of the *seven*, and the peculiarities which distinguish them from the *ten*, are to be collected from three remarks of the angel, who explains the vision. 1. The beast himself is “as one of the seven” *ἐκ τῶν ἑπτά*, and comes in as an eighth king, (ver. 11.) and consequently executes the office belonging to them. We may therefore conclude that they resemble him, in being *secular* powers;—tyrannous, and inimical to true religion,—which their origin, as horns rising out of the beast, also shows. 2. They do not reign contemporary, but in succession to each other; for at the time when the angel spake of them, one only was in existence; five were already fallen; another, a seventh, was to come, and remain a little while, to whom the beast himself succeeds, as an eighth. But these seven kings are also represented by the seven heads of the beast, which are likewise said to be seven mountains, “on which the woman sitteth,” or, literally translated, “where the woman is seated upon them.” They may therefore be supposed subservient to the harlot, at least during the time when she rides the beast, and directs his power. But that the kings are mountains, that is, seats of elevated power, and reign in succession, may seem to imply,

that under the name of king, not the person ruling, but the *kingdom* ruled, is intended, and perhaps under any form of rule; for in a similar prophecy, (Dan. vii. 17, 23,) the fourth *king* is described as “diverse from all *kingdoms*.” And, in fact, it is the Roman government which is thus represented; and which, though commonly called the fourth *monarchy*, was in form a *republic* at the time when it succeeded by conquest to the Macedonian empire, and obtained the Asiatic provinces.

In attempting to point out these seven kingdoms, or forms of government, it will be useful to begin with the sixth; with that which was existing at the time when the angel described them. This was the power imperial; for at that time one man, Domitian, under the title of emperor, exercised the supreme authority, uttering oppressive edicts against the Christian Church. But can we trace back the forms of government which succeeded each other under the Roman domination, so that they may fairly appear five, preceding the imperial form? Kingly, Consular, Decemviral, are confessedly three distinct forms of government, established by three separate revolutions. And the balance of power, continually changing, and verging at one time in favour of the patrician or aristocratic, at another of the plebeian or democratic scale, have probably produced two other distinct forms of government. Such indeed we find recorded in the Roman history, as exercised under dictators and military tribunes.<sup>1</sup> These may appear to be the five heads, which were fallen, at the time when the angel spake. The sixth or imperial head,

<sup>1</sup> These, as Bishop Newton observes, are the five forms of government antecedent to the imperial form, enumerated and distinguished as such “by those who should best know, the two greatest Roman historians, Livy and Tacitus.” Livii, lib. vi. 1; Tacit. Annal. lib. i. sub initio.



was then existing, and continued to exist till the year 475; when it terminated with Augustulus, the last emperor. To this imperial form succeeded the government set up by the Gothic conquerors, when after a short time, a magistrate, with the title of exarch, presided in Rome. But in the dark ages, which were now commencing, the beast begins again to appear. He had disappeared under the auspices of Constantine; now he revives, and the civil power of the empire passes into the hands in which it becomes idolatrous, blasphemous, tyrannical, and oppressive to true religion. This was the time when the false prophet of the thirteenth chapter began to exalt the power of the beast; which continued to increase gradually till the more flagrant times when the harlot was seen mounted upon the beast, assuming the reins, and directing his ferocious power. Thus he became the eighth form of government; and, in this form, he exceeded all his predecessors in cruel and exterminating warfare against the saints. The popes, and their agents in the corrupt Church, made use of the civil power of the kings to persecute and destroy those who dared to profess a creed or worship, other than they had authorised. Having uttered their decrees against such persons, they delivered them to the secular arm, which at their instigation was ready to apply the fire and faggot. From the time that the reigning powers of Europe were willing to enforce the decrees of persecution at the call of a corrupt, domineering religion, is to be dated the reign of the beast, as an eighth head. It is not, strictly speaking, a head of the beast; for the heads were seven, and were all fallen; but it is the revival of a tyrannical, persecuting power in their place. It is a form still more beastly, subsisting after the seven heads were gone. It is the whole

beast, or the perfect image of him revived, by the false prophet and by the harlot.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This attempt to interpret a difficult part of the prophecy, is taken, in a great measure, from my former work, and was founded principally on the comments of Mede and his followers. The *five* kings or ruling powers in Rome, which are said to be fallen, are so stated upon the authority of the Roman historians, who, having lived before the publication of the prophecy, could have no views respecting its fulfilment; and the *sixth* power, said to be, or exist, at the time when the prophecy was delivered, can be no other (if we pursue this method of interpretation) than the dynasty of Roman emperors, so long as they held the dominion over Italy and Rome. So far the exposition may appear clearly admissible. But the seventh head or ruling power,—which follows the sixth, or imperial, continues a short time, and then gives place to the beast himself to rule as an eighth king,—is attended with difficulty. Let us see if we can clear it up.

The ruling power of the sixth head ended in the year 475 or 476, when the last emperor of the west, Augustulus, was dethroned by the Gothic leader of the Heruli, Odoacer, who at that time became king of Italy with supreme power over Rome. He held the sovereignty about sixteen years, when it was seized by another Gothic leader, Theodoric, the head of the Ostrogoths, whose successors continued the Gothic dynasty till the year 537—539. Gibbon considers it as one dynasty, occupying the space of sixty years. It was a perfect sovereignty during that period, and totally independent of the emperors of the east, and thus seems entitled to be considered as the *seventh* head of the beast. Sixty years being a small space, compared with that filled by the sixth preceding it, or by the eighth which followed it.

But it will be said, if this was the *seventh* head or ruling power, are we not to expect, that upon its dissolution, the rule of the eighth head,—of the beast himself,—would immediately take place? And did this so happen? Certainly not; for history informs us, that the dissolution of the Gothic reign was accomplished by the arms of the eastern Roman emperor Justinian, under his generals Belisarius and Narses, (an. 537—539,) and from that time the emperors resumed the government of Italy and Rome, administering it by their lieutenants under the title of *exarchs*. Gibbon relates these to have been eighteen in succession, during two hundred years. “Thus,” says he, “the emperors of the east obtained again the power of Italy and Rome. The exarchs were seated on the throne at Ravenna, which had been occupied by the western emperors, and by the

2. The prophecy concerning the *ten* horns or kings is singularly plain, and exempt from enigmatical obscurity. The commentator therefore may be satisfied, in stating it under a brief paraphrase, and then pointing out the manner in which it has hitherto been fulfilled in history, and the probable completion of what remains unfulfilled.

The ten horns are ten kings or kingdoms, which had not received their dominion at the time when the

Gothic kings. They were the representatives of the emperors of the Romans in peace and war, with the full remains of civil, military, and even ecclesiastical power. Rome was oppressed by their iron sceptre, and degraded to the second rank of cities." These quotations, extracted from the xli. xliii. and xlvth chapters of the "Decline and Fall," will clearly show that the reign of the eighth head, or beast himself, did not take effect immediately upon the dissolution of the seventh, if that be fulfilled in the Gothic kings of Italy. The intervention of another power prevented this—the power imperial. But let it be considered that this was not a new power, but one that had reigned before, and for a long continuance in Italy, being only a recovery and resumption of sovereignty; and then it may be allowed to be such an intervention as does not materially disturb the order of succession. It seems *necessary* to consider it in this light, for otherwise the principle, upon which the whole method of interpretation is founded, must be renounced. For in the former part of it, as Bishop Newton observes, neither the consular nor dictatorial power were exercised all at one time without remission, but interrupted, repeated, and intervening between the other powers or heads of the beast. This want of continuity did not destroy their distinct unity, in the opinion of the historians of ancient Rome.

In short, Rome was never free from foreign masters, nor the popes at full liberty to exercise a temporal sovereignty there and in Italy, and an ecclesiastical dominion over the kings, till Pepin and his successors conferred upon them the elevation and the power, (774 to 800.) This will be found the true era when the harlot mounted the beast and directed him and his kings. Rome was hitherto subservient to the secular power; she now obtained the direction of it in a considerable degree. At the same time we cannot infer with any certainty that this was also the commencement of the twelve hundred and sixty years. These might, and probably did, begin sooner, but at what exact period seems more than we are permitted to ascertain.

angel announced them as such, but were destined to receive it for a certain season, contemporary with the beast. These are to act with one counsel and design, suggested to them by the overruling power of God; and to give their power to the beast, until the divine predictions shall be completed, in the victory obtained over them by the Lamb, (for he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.) But, there shall also come a time when the kings shall hate the harlot, (not the beast, with whom they still continue to act,) and shall lower her pride and influence, and strip her of her rich clothing and decorations, and devour and utterly destroy her.

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HISTORY exhibits to us a time, when the Roman empire in the West, symbolised by the beast of this chapter, gradually declined, and, by the irruption and repeated attacks of barbarian hordes, was broken and fell to pieces. From the ruins of this mass ten kingdoms arose: they are thus enumerated by different writers, not only at their first establishment, but also in their progress in successive periods. Though much varied in respect to the people of which they were composed, their number has been nearly the same; so that if an average were to be taken in the long course of fourteen hundred years, reaching to our times, the number *ten* would be found to predominate. And when we consider the natural instability of supreme power, the wars, conquests, and the accumulation of empire, to which nations are exposed,—and which have been prevalent to such excess in other quarters of the globe, during the same period,—we must think it a matter of wonder that the ten European kingdoms should subsist as they have done, in fulfilment of the prediction. But

it has been fulfilled, not only in this particular, but in the character and designation of the kings. They have been at times seduced by the harlot and her intoxicating cup; they have imbibed her doctrines, and executed her bloody decrees. But a time also is promised, and has already dawned, when the kings or rulers of nations shall open their eyes to the false pretensions of their deceiver, and perform their appointed part respecting her downfall and disgrace.

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AFTER this analytical view of the seventeenth chapter under separate divisions, we may proceed to collect a brief, but general and conclusive result. It is clear, that there is one prominent object exhibited by the angel, on which we are called to fix our principal attention: “*Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.*” This title, pronounced to be *a mystery*, is written upon her forehead. “*Come hither,*” says the angel to the apostle, “*I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot.*” She is to be judged; and her sentence is disclosed partly in this chapter, but more fully in the two succeeding. The other agents in this vision, the beast and the kings, are introduced principally to show her character and actions, for these are to be set forth before she receives her doom.

She has the name of *Babylon*, but, as it plainly appears, in a mystical sense only (*Μυστηριον*); and she amply fulfils the type of the ancient Babylon, by the acquisition of immense power and splendour, by tyranny and oppression, by the captivity and persecution of the people of God. Compared with the woman in the wilderness,—the pure, primitive, persecuted Church, from which she boasts her origin,—she has little or no resemblance thereto, but



in name and profession. Yet she is the very image of the same Church in name and worldly descent, during its utmost degeneracy and corruption, disgracing the pages of history, before the Reformation. Comparing her with the New Jerusalem in chapter the twenty-first,—for she is both a church and a city,—we perceive that she is not the bride of the lamb, but a degraded cast-away, a divorced adulteress.

The beast that carries her, and submits to her guidance, shows the influence she has acquired over the secular power, which becomes instrumental to her brutal cruelty. And the beast being exclusively Roman, confirms her Roman origin and connexions.

The seven kings, or kingdoms in succession, are of the same description, and can be found only in Rome : and so likewise are the ten kings, the remains of the Roman empire in the West, beguiled and corrupted by the great harlot, whose seat of ecclesiastical empire is described, first, as “*upon many waters,*” that is, “*peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and languages.*” Thus is her influence extended over an immense range of population. But, secondly, her stationary throne is upon the famous “*seven mountains ;*” that great “*city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*”

Little doubt can arise in the mind of the attentive enquirer, concerning the completion of this prophecy. The symbols applied by the authority of Scripture, adapt themselves clearly and expressly to Rome ecclesiastical and hierarchal, and to no other community in history : it is this Rome, in the zenith of her proudest dominion over the kings and nations of the western world. The great object of the prophecy, the harlot, city or church, is undoubtedly Roman. The heavenly conductor of the apostle plainly de-

clares to him, that in the woman, he beholds “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth :” that this is Rome, must be, and indeed is, universally allowed. The beast who carries her is also Roman ; so are the ten kings or kingdoms which rise out of him, and are seduced and governed by her influence ; so likewise are the seven mountains, being in their literal sense, the station of Rome, or typically, a succession of governments which history acknowledges in Rome only. But that these, and the other descriptive symbols of this chapter, cannot be applied to Rome pagan, and are fulfilled in Rome ecclesiastical only, has been clearly shown by many commentators. To this therefore our exposition is confined : but, if it were otherwise, if we might look to other quarters of the globe, beyond the European, for the completion of the prophecy, we should assuredly look in vain. There have been many false prophets in various regions, of great extent and population, seated, like Rome, “on many waters ;” who, by “lying wonders,” and heavenly pretensions, have erected and exercised an ecclesiastical tyranny over men. But the symbols require this to be performed in a church professing itself to be Christian ; a church corrupt, worldly, and apostate, which hath forsaken her God, and been divorced and cast away by him. The Mahometan hierarchy, if it could be proved Roman in the same character and extent as the Roman church, would have some claim to the completion. But, where is the intoxicating cup ? Mahomet did not seduce his innumerable converts ; but by war, and persecution, and intolerance, forced them to submit to his tyranny. He approached them, as it has been said, with the Koran in one hand, and the sword in the other. And where, in the Mahometan empire, are the ten kings reigning for a vast succession of years, in their own

free and separate dominions, yet wielding their secular power so frequently at the will of the ecclesiastical dominant? Mahomet and his wide-spread religion is indeed a horn, and a very “notable one,” of the second two-horned beast; but the enigmatical description in this chapter, belongs exclusively to the other horn, the Papal.

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## PART VI.

### SECTION IV.

#### *The Judgment of Babylon continued.*

CHAP. xviii. ver. 1—24.

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.

12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble.

13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing.

16 And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no

more at all in thee : for thy merchants were the great men of the earth ; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

WE are now come to that part of this sacred book, where its prophecies seem to look for their completion to future time only : the useful light of history forsakes us. It is in vain that we search the records of past ages, to fulfil the symbolical narration : our curiosity may be increased, but our knowledge and means of interpretation are greatly diminished. It is therefore highly important, that we proceed with pious caution and discretion.

We have a permitted right to examine accurately the symbols of the predictions ; for they are presented before us to call forth and exercise our active enquiries ; and we may apply them *generally*, and in the sense which they evidently bear in other sacred prophecies. But, a *particular* application of them to future events, to such as may be pictured only in our own imaginations, is not to be indulged. The notes published upon this part of the prophecy in my former work, were written under this restraint, and, after a careful examination of the best comments ; I shall therefore have frequent recourse to them upon the present occasion.

Ver. 1. *And after these things.*] The angel of the vials having fulfilled the purpose for which he had taken the prophet apart into the wilderness, to show him “ the harlot,” the mystical Babylon, whose fall had been denounced in chap. xiv. 8 ; xv. 19 ; the same scenery is renewed, which had attended the exhibition of the warnings and vials. Heaven is again restored to view, and the angels descend to perform the parts allotted them. The prophecy now to be produced, is connected with chap. xiv. 8, where the



same words are used by the angel, who proclaims *the fall of Babylon*. That which is there said in few words, is now particularly described. It is a sequel also to the seventeenth chapter, in which the angel proposed to show not only Babylon the great harlot, but also *her judgment*; which is now pronounced. It is connected also with the seventh vial; for it is here that "*Babylon is remembered*," as was promised under that vial (ch. xvi. 19.); her *plagues* are come, and she is finally destroyed by fire, as, in ch. xvii. it was said she shall be.

Ib. *Another angel.*] A foreign commentator, impressed with the enlightening character of this heavenly messenger, had pronounced him to be the Holy Ghost. And Vitringa, though he sees the impropriety of this interpretation, so far gives way to it as to admit that he may be a symbolic resemblance of this portion of the divine Godhead. But we are told expressly, that it is "another angel." And the illumination is expressive of that heavenly light of pure doctrine, which will beam upon the earth at the destruction of Babylon the great. The symbol of the Holy Ghost was already placed upon the scene, as stationary before the throne. (Ch. i. 4.) This divine Spirit never appears in the form of man or angel; but his heavenly presence is indubitably proved by his wondrous works and universal action. He does not speak, but inspires others, whether angels or men, to speak the words of God, declaratory or prophetic. If this speech were *immediately* from the Holy Spirit, it would not have been interrupted by "another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, &c." (Ver. 4.)<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 2. *An habitation of devils.*] Or, *dæmons*, *Δαιμονία*. *The mystical Babylon*, like the ancient and

<sup>1</sup> See the note on chap. x. 2.

literal one its type, is to be *utterly* destroyed. And when the *utter destruction* of a city is denounced in Scripture, the site of that city is commonly described as becoming the haunt and habitation of wild beasts, and of such loathsome reptiles as are found in the forsaken ruins of a city. (See for examples, Isa. xiii. 20—22; xxxiv. 10—16; Jer. ix. 11; li. 37.) On one of these passages it is observed by Bishop Lowth, that Hebrew words expressive of such animals, are translated in the Septuagint by the word *Δαιμονια*, which is used here.<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 3. *Because all the nations, &c.*] The cause of her judgment and fall is assigned. She who, as a Church of Christ, should have been the teacher and preserver of pure religion and morality, had become the seducer and corrupter of the nations and their kings; and had set the example of that insolent luxury, disposing to irreligion, which it was her duty to oppose.<sup>2</sup> It will be seen clearly from this verse, as well as from other passages of this chapter, that the great harlot of the seventeenth chapter, there called Babylon, and the Babylon whose judgment is here pronounced, are the same. The same intoxicating cup, the same nations and kings are repeated as the causes of the divine judgments upon her.

Ver. 4. *Come out of her, my people.*] The same commanding call is to be seen in Jer. li. 6, which is again repeated *after* the fall of the literal Babylon. (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.) Of this injunction, great use was made by the Reformers. The sentence of retaliation is to be seen also in the ancient prophets. (Ps. cxxxvii; Jer. l. 15—17, 29; li. 24, 49.) To

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lowth on Isa. xxxiv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> See Schleusner or Parkhurst in voc. *σπρηνος*.

God alone, “vengeance belongeth;” he is to reward according to their doings; yet man *may* be employed to execute vengeance.

Ver. 7. *I am seated as a queen.*] The same imagery is used in Isaiah xlvii; which prophecy contains the divine judgment on the *literal* Babylon.

Ver. 8. *With fire shall she be utterly burned.*] This sentence imports utter destruction: for, where fire has holden its complete course, no particles of the former mode of existence remain.

Ver. 9. *The kings of the earth.*] It is remarkable, that the kings are described, in chap. xvii. as the instruments of destruction to the spiritual Babylon; yet here they are represented as mourning her fall. The event will show the completion of both prophecies. It is far from improbable, that they who from envy, and an avaricious desire of her spoils, delight to destroy Babylon, may afterwards lament the fall of her who supported their own power.—But we must not prophesy.

Ver. 10. *Alas! alas!*] The use of the Greek word, *ovai, ovai, alas! alas!* or, woe! woe! in this passage, has suggested to some commentators, that under this part of the prophecy is contained the *third woe*, whose period and character are not clearly described. This notion has been entertained on a very false foundation. It has no other ground or colour of support, than these two adverbial interjections, which occur, as they must occur, in many other passages. The three woes, coming under the trumpets, are woes on the Christian Church; this, if it be a woe, is a woe upon its enemy and persecutor; over whose fall we are invited, by the angel, not to la-

ment as for a woe, but to rejoice as on deliverance. (Ver. 20.) The third woe is announced, but is never described. It comes secretly. It may perhaps be seen, felt, and acknowledged, before the final fall of antichrist; perhaps, before the twelve hundred and sixty years are expired.

Ib. *In one hour.*] This is repeated three times in the course of this prophecy of the judgment on Babylon; and is generally understood to signify, that the desolation of Babylon shall come *suddenly*. But this does not agree with the present appearance of the event, as exhibited in history. Babylon seems to decline, and wear away *gradually*; according to the prophecy of Daniel, ch. vii. 26. See Mr. Wintle's translation, agreeing with the Greek of the Septuagint, "to be wasted and destroyed unto the end." "*In one hour*," seems to mean, *in one uninterrupted period of time*, whether it be of longer or shorter continuance; it is not said in one moment, in one point of time.

Ver. 11. *The merchants, &c.*] The lamentation of the kings shows the extreme height of worldly power to which the mystical Babylon had arrived; the mourning of the merchants, her extreme wealth and luxury. As Babylon, of the ancient world, was her type for power and dominion, so was Tyre for mercantile riches. (See Isa. xxiii.; Ezek. xxvi. xxvii. xxviii.) The enumeration of the articles of trade by which this Babylon is described as making an iniquitous profit, has something in it very peculiar and striking. It proceeds by a climax, or gradation, from one article to another, till it rises to the *bodies*, and then to "*the souls of men*." Can we avoid recalling to memory the purgatory, the penances, the commutations, the indulgences, made *saleable* in the corrupt papal church?

Ver. 12. *Fine linen.*] It is not necessary, respecting this passage, to determine the contested point, whether βυσσος was used to signify linen, or cotton. It is plain from the context, as also from Luke xvi. 19, that it was the apparel only of the rich; and so it is here coupled with purple, scarlet, silk, &c. which were certainly the distinguishing habits of the opulent. Silk, at the time this Revelation was delivered, was a very rare and dear commodity, being then the produce of China only.<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 17. *Every pilot, &c.*] Here is presented a third company of mourners, of the same kind with those who lamented over the ancient maritime Tyre. (Ezek. xxvii. 32.) That these should be so affected, shows the extent of influence which the mystical Babylon had acquired in distant nations; for she corrupts wheresoever her baneful commerce can be extended. The reading ἐπὶ τοπον, restored by Griesbach, seems to be of great authority; in confirmation of which it is observed, that in the Vulgate, the word *locum* was anciently read, which has been changed to *lacum*.<sup>2</sup> It does not, however, appear to afford an appropriate sense; and therefore, many attempts have been made to amend the reading; but it is not very material; for the context shows how it is to be generally understood, namely, of those who sail in ships. I suspect ἐπὶ τοπον, to be a technical maritime phrase; but have translated it as if written ἐπὶ τον τοπον: in the sense in which the Æthiopic version seems to have rendered it.

Ver. 20. *Rejoice over her, O heaven, &c.*] The same rejoicing is announced upon the prophesied fall of the ancient Babylon, (Jer. li. 48.); and her eter-

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, Hist. ch. xl. where the history of silk is collected.

<sup>2</sup> Father Simon.



nal desolation is represented under the same imagery. (Jer. li. 64.) “But what reason had the Christians to rejoice over the calamities brought on Rome by Alaric or Totilas; in which they themselves were the principal sufferers? And how were these calamities any vindication of their cause, or of the cause of true religion?”<sup>1</sup>

Ver. 21. *A stone, &c.*] Thus also the ancient Babylon, condemned never to rise again, is described as sinking, like a stone, in Euphrates. (Jer. li. 63, 64.)

Ver. 22. *The voice of harpers.*] Here, the cheerful noise heard in a populous city, “the busy hum of men,” is poetically described. There is resemblance to the great poet’s description of a joyous city.<sup>2</sup> But so entire and final is the destruction of Babylon, that these shall be heard in her *no more for ever*. The prototype of this description is to be seen in Jer. vii. 34; xvi. 9; xxv. 10; xxxiii. 2. But Rome, as Bishop Newton observes, has never suffered this utter desolation. She has often been captured and plundered by the enemy; but she still remains, says he, a joyous city, the resort of strangers, delighting Europe with her music and her arts.<sup>3</sup> I shall not pursue the learned prelate in his endeavours to prove that modern Rome is to be destroyed by *fire*, literally understood. Fire, in prophetic language, implies utter destruction; and it is the corruption, the superstition, and usurped dominion of Rome, which are to be utterly destroyed, not her buildings. She is Babylon in a spiritual sense; and in a spiritual sense it is that she is to be burned and consumed, “even unto the end.”

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Newton, *Dissert. on Proph.* vol. iii. p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> Hom. *Iliad.* lib. xviii. 490.

<sup>3</sup> *Dissert.* iii. 317.

Ver. 23, 24. *Sorcery, blood of prophets.*] We have here two distinguishing marks of this corrupt church, which have been before noticed: 1. The arts of deception, like the sorceries and incantations of the heathen priests, by which she has beguiled the nations and their kings. 2. Her tyranny, by which she has persecuted even to tortures and death, those who refuse her yoke. And as the blood of the prophets was required of the ancient Jerusalem, so is the blood of the Christian saints and martyrs, from this corrupt city. (Luke xi. 50, 51.)

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THE denunciation of the judgment of Babylon, contained in the speech of the angel, and continued in the heavenly voice, seems principally intended for the support and comfort of the poor persecuted Christian Church, during the high zenith of the antichristian usurpation. To answer this purpose the more effectually, almost every part of the prophecy is taken from the prophetic denunciations of the Old Testament, against Babylon, Tyre, &c. which were known to have been *literally* fulfilled. No other method could afford such perfect confidence to those, who, in the new Babylon, clearly discovered the tyranny and wickedness of the old one. And from the time that Papal Rome was acknowledged to be this new Babylon, (and this discovery was made early in the twelfth century,<sup>1</sup>) great must have been the encouragement derived to the Reformers from this chapter of the Apocalypse.

<sup>1</sup> See Mede, p. 517, 722, &c. Thuani Hist. lib. vi. c. 16.

## PART VI.

## SECTION V.

*Exultation in Heaven, over the fallen Babylon, and upon the approach of the New Jerusalem.*

CHAP. xix. ver. 1—10.

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia ; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God :

2 For, true and righteous are his judgments ; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication ; and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4 And the four-and-twenty elders, and the four beasts, fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying ; Amen ; Alleluia.

5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying ; Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia ; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him : for, the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for, the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9 And he saith unto me ; Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him : And he said unto me, See thou do it not : I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus : worship God : for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Ver. 1. *And after these things, &c.*] In the 20th verse of the last chapter, Heaven, as described in ch. iv. and the saints, who are stationed in grand chorus before the throne, (ch. xv. 2,) are exhorted to rejoice over the fall of Babylon. The representation of this fall being now completed, we hear the choral song.

Ib. *Allelujah!*] Heb. Praise ye Jehovah! a word of holy exultation, which hath passed into many languages even of the heathens, both ancient and modern.<sup>1</sup> This song of praise breaks forth on the fall of the harlot,—of Babylon; and as she falls by the last vial, it has retrospect to that vial, and to the rest, which are preparatory to her fall.

Ver. 4. *And the twenty-four elders, &c.*] The song of praise is begun by the redeemed saints, in conjunction probably with the innumerable company of angels.<sup>2</sup> The elders, and the cherubim, who are near the throne, sing the antiphonal “Allelujah, Amen.” Thus the song beginning, from the lowest, advances to the highest orders of heavenly beings;<sup>3</sup> from “the redeemed from amongst men,” to the cherubim, who are “in the midst of the throne and around the throne,” (ch. iv. 6;) till at length a voice proceeds from the throne itself, (ver. 5.) joining in the same harmony, and exhorting all the servants of God, of every rank and degree, to praise him. The exhortation is immediately obeyed.—And magnificent is the effect, when all unite their accordant voices, to sing praise to the almighty King; who, by destroying the impure harlot, (which had usurped

<sup>1</sup> See Schleusner or Parkhurst, in voc.

<sup>2</sup> See notes, ch. iv. 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> And therefore the elders are mentioned here before the cherubim, as observed in note, ch. iv. 6, 9.

the name of his Church upon earth,) had prepared the way for the Virgin-Bride, the true Church, who is now to be owned and espoused publicly by her Redeemer.

Ver. 7. *The marriage of the Lamb is come.*] The holy and mystical union of Christ with his Church, is frequently mentioned in Scripture, (Isa. liv. 5; Jer. iii. 14; Hos. ii. 19, 20; Matt. xxii. xxv; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 22—32.) The harlot, pretending to be that spouse, (ch. xviii. 16,) having been now convicted of fornication with the worldly powers; having been judged, and eternally discarded; the attention in heaven and earth is naturally turned to that chaste and pure Virgin, (2 Cor. xi. 2,) who is now to be presented to her Lord. The choral song brings her to view: arrayed, not “in purple and scarlet, and gold and precious stones;” not in worldly splendour, like the harlot; but in the pure, simple, but resplendent garments, which are the clothing of the heavenly inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> She had “washed her garments, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb,” (ch. vii. 13.) By faith in her Redeemer, she is become righteous; for this is “the fine linen, the righteousness of the saints.”

Ver. 9. *And he saith unto me, Write.*] From the first opening of the vision, which exhibits “*the judgment of the great harlot*,” an angel, one of the seven, had graciously accompanied the prophet, explaining to him the mystery, (xvii. 7.) This vision now closes with the triumphal chorus in heaven. The angel then orders him to write what he had seen; which was to be delivered to the seven Churches, and not to be sealed or suppressed with the prophecy of the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 3; Rev. iv. 4; iii. 5, where see the note; xv. 6.



seven thunders, (ch. x. 4.) He then fixes the attention of the prophet, and of those who are to read what he thus writes, on the due application of what is now represented. “Blessed are they who are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb!” Blessed are they who by the grace of God, co-operating with their own endeavours, “make their calling and election sure,” (2 Pet. i. 10;) who, having on the “wedding garment” of righteousness, (Matt. xxii. 11,) become entitled to “sit down to meat” in the kingdom of heaven, (Luke xii. 37.) The angel then concludes with this solemn assurance: “These are the true words of God.” All that thou hast now heard and seen, will assuredly come to pass.

Ver. 10. *And I fell down before his feet, &c.*] The prophet, affected with astonishment at what he had beholden and heard, and with veneration and gratitude towards his heavenly conductor, follows the natural bent of his feelings; and falls down before the angel, to express them, after the custom of the eastern nations. But the angel renounces this kind of adoration, ranking himself only where other intimations of Scripture have placed him and his fellow-angels, “as a ministering spirit, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation,” (Heb. i. 14.) The prohibition to worship angels, or any other being than God, is repeated in chapter xxii. 9, and, thus repeated, contains a very strong injunction against that angel-worship in which a great part of the Christian world has been involved.

Ib. *The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*] My office (says the angel) for which you honour me, is of the same kind with yours; I support the testimony of Jesus, by bringing prophecy from heaven; you and your fellow-servants perform a simi-

lar duty on earth, supporting the same testimony, by preaching, confession, martyrdom, &c.; even in the present instance, we are fellow-servants of the same Lord. I show to thee the vision from heaven, thou writest it for the use of those who inhabit the earth. Let us both worship God, and God only.

## PART VII.

## SECTION I.

*The Lord, whose name is called THE WORD OF GOD,  
descends to battle and victory.*

## CHAP. XIX. VER. 11—18.

11 And I saw heaven opened ; and behold, a white horse ; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True ; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire ; and on his head were many crowns ; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself :

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood : and his name is called, The Word of God.

14 And the armies which were in heaven, followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron : and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun : and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God ;

18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

We are now arrived at that signal and expected point of the prophecy, to which the preceding parts

seem principally to tend, and in which they have their completion; the grand and decisive combat between the Christian and antichristian powers. Here the seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, and all their accompanying warnings, unite. Heaven opens, and the white horse appears,

Qualis ab incepto processerat ;—et sibi constat.

He is the same white horse, whom we saw proceeding on his career of victory, in the early part of the vision; whose rider went forth conquering, and for to conquer," (ch. vi. 1.) He has been pursuing his destined course, though not always equally in sight;—he now appears again in more splendid array. The Christian Church, again pure (*εν λευκοις*), sees her Messiah in person, leading her forces, and fighting her battles. "Faithful and true" to his promises, (Matt. xxviii. 20; Rev. i. 6; iii. 14.) he now gives more manifest assistance to the cause of his religion. And while he confounds and destroys his enemies, it is apparent that "his judgments are righteous." He appears in this passage as a dreadful warrior, yet there is little new in the description; we acknowledge the same *King of kings* whom we have before seen in other parts of the prophecy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This title is attributed to the conquering Messiah, in ch. xvii. 14. The conquerors of the east had vainly usurped it. On a tombstone of Cyrus, in the city of Pasargadæ, was a Persic inscription ending with this Greek line,

*Ενθαδ' Εγω κεῖμαι, Κυρος βασιλευς βασιληων*

Here am I buried, Cyrus, king of kings.

*Strabo*, lib. 15. p. 100.

The Asiatic monarchs followed the example; and medals also of Parthian kings, of Tigranes, of Pharnaces, &c., are found with the

The epithets, elsewhere applied to the Messiah, are here collected, and so arranged as to display his glory, his power, and his anger, terrible to his unrepentant foes. He leads his armies, the faithful and pure Christians, (ch. xii. 13 ; xix. 8.) to assured victory ; victory so decisive, that none of his enemies escape. The birds, who prey on flesh, are bidden to a banquet on their carcasses, (Ezek. xxxix. 17, 18.) The angel stationed in the sun, betokening the light and knowledge which shall then beam upon mankind, invites all the world to join true religion, and partake the victory.

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## PART VII.

### SECTION II.

#### *The Conflict, and the Victory over the Wild Beast and his False Prophet.*

CH. XIX. ver. 19, to the end.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse ; which sword proceeded out of his mouth ; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

After the appearance of the Messiah and his same title inscribed.—Pinkerton on Medals, vol. i. p. 203.—See ch. i. 14, 16 ; ii. 12, 17, 18, 27 ; iii. 7, 12, 14 ; xiv. 19, 20 ; xvii. 14 ; and the notes. Compare also Isa. lix. lxv. 17. lxiii. 1, &c.



armies, the armies of the worldly powers, under the beast, the false prophet, and the kings, who are (ch. xvii. 13) mustered by the spirits of demons to the great battle, (ch. xvi. 14,) come in view. But the conflict, for which so vast preparation had been made, is finished in an instant.<sup>1</sup> The leaders, they who during so many ages had abused their civil and ecclesiastical power, are taken, and consigned to that everlasting prison, to which such offenders were originally doomed, (ch. xvii. 8; Matt. xxv. 41.) Their followers, both small and great, fall, and are utterly destroyed by the word of God.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the kingdom of the beast and false prophet, of the civil and ecclesiastical power, administered so long and so abusively, comes to its end; and the kingdom of the Messiah, and of righteousness, is established. This is that happy period, the theme of many prophecies, which, being still future, it is presumptuous to explain particularly: yet thus far we may generally and safely conclude, that as we have already seen the reign of the beast and false prophet, the mystery of iniquity,<sup>3</sup> so exactly foretold, and the prophecy so wonderfully fulfilled;—tyranny, irreligion, hypocrisy, and immorality triumphant and oppressive, by the means of pretended commissions from heaven; so this usurpation will be utterly destroyed, and pure religion, and peace and happiness, succeed. “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down

<sup>1</sup> There is great propriety and sublimity in this rapidity of victory. An inventor would probably have dwelt upon this conflict, and have described it in a variety of detail: but this is a victory in which the arm of Omnipotence is displayed; and of which it may be said without extravagance, *Venit, vidit, vicit.*

<sup>2</sup> Ch. i. 16. Compare with the battle here represented, Isaiah xxxiv; Jer. vii. 32, &c.; Ezek. xxxix. 17, &c.; Zeph. i. 7. See also Bishop Lowth de Sac. Poës. Heb. lec. xx.

<sup>3</sup> See notes, ch. xiii.

with the kid," &c. "They shall not hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain; the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. &c.)

## PART VII.

### SECTION III.

#### *The Dragon taken and confined.*

##### CHAP. XX. ver. 1—3.

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

THE removal of the beast and false prophet is followed by the decline of impiety and wickedness, and by the rapid growth of true religion and virtue. This is symbolically displayed. The dragon, that ancient foe of man, who under the disguise of a serpent, had beguiled Eve; who had lent his throne, his authority and his arts, to the beast and the false prophet; to mislead the nations and their kings;<sup>1</sup> is taken and confined. His influence upon earth is wonderfully diminished. And this important object is accomplished by the same superior agency. For, though an angel is represented as binding Satan,

<sup>1</sup> See notes, ch. xii.

yet, whence has he the commission and the power? whence the key of the bottomless deep, but from him who alone is described as having “the keys of hell and of death,” (ch. i. 18,) from him who shutteth, and no man openeth? (Ch. iii. 7.) By his permission, the bottomless deep had been opened;<sup>1</sup> by his power it is now closed and sealed. The author of all iniquity is confined in it, for a time; after which he is permitted to come forth again “for a season,” and “to deceive the nations.” But *the beasts* rise up no more. They are no longer the successful agents of Satan. He is no longer permitted to employ this kind of civil and religious tyranny against true religion and the happiness of man. The blissful season, during which Satan continues bounden, is called a thousand years. But of this more particularly, under the next section.

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## PART VII.

### SECTION IV.

#### *The Millennium.*

CHAP. XX. ver. 4—6.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sate upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. ix. 1.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Ver. 4. *And I saw thrones, &c.*] In Daniel vii. 22, 26, “ the judgment sits ; ” — “ judgment is given to the saints ; — they possess the kingdom.” To this passage, St. Paul seems to allude in 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3, as well as does our Lord’s promise in Matt. xix. 28 ; Luke xxii. 30, giving thrones of judgment to his disciples. These prophecies, dark in themselves, until the event and completion shall illustrate them, are here repeated, with some additional information ; for, it is affirmed, that this reign of the saints shall continue “ a thousand years.” Who the saints are, is at first expressed in very general terms, as also is the prophecy of Daniel. “ *They* sate ; judgment was given unto *them*.” But among those who sit upon these thrones, are afterwards expressly enumerated they, who during the long conflict with the beast and false prophet, have kept the faith, even unto death, and refused the idolatrous worship to which they were tempted or forced by the worldly powers. These faithful sons and champions of the Church, are described as living and reigning with the Anointed, or Christ, *the thousand years*. And this early or first resurrection appears to be their exclusive privilege, and not to belong to the rest of the dead, who, it is said, shall not live, until the thousand years shall be completed.

Much has been written upon this promised Millennium, or reign of the saints ; yet little that can afford satisfaction to the judicious.<sup>1</sup> The meaning of a

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, in Civ. Dei, lib. xx. c. 7, commenting on this chapter, says, that the doctrine of a Millennium, in which the saints were to enjoy a corporeal resurrection in this world, was founded on a notion that, after six thousand years of trouble, the saints should enjoy one thousand years of sabbath, or rest. But the doctrine was

prophecy of this kind can only be made manifest by the event which is to fulfil it. Before that time shall arrive, it is unsafe to conjecture after what method it shall be fulfilled; whether, as some prophecies, literally, or as others, typically; whether the departed saints and martyrs shall actually be raised again in their own persons, to effect so glorious a change in religion and morals, or whether, like Elijah, in the person of John Baptist, and David, in that of Christ, they shall live again in the persons of other saints, who shall fulfil their characters and offices, no man may presume to determine. It is best, therefore, after the example of the wise father Irenæus, respecting another prophecy, to “*wait the completion of the prediction.*”<sup>1</sup> Yet, if we are not permitted to descend to a special interpretation, we may receive advantage from a general view. We may confidently indulge a well-grounded expectation, that happy times, of long duration, are yet destined for the Christian Church, even here upon earth. For the days will come, and seem at no very great distance, when, the beast and false prophet being removed, and Babylon sunk for ever, the devil, that ancient foe, shall be deprived of his wonted influence, and the prophecies, which in the Old Testament, as well as in the book of

founded on this passage of the revelation. The notion of the time only, in which the prophecy will be fulfilled, was taken from this tradition of the Church. From Papias, a good man, but weak and credulous, seem to have been derived those earthly notions of a Millennium, branded with the name of Chiliasm, which were adopted by some eminent writers of the ancient Church; by Irenæus, Apollinaris, Tertullian, Victorinus, Lactantius, &c. But there was another, and much more debasing, notion of a Millennium, entertained in those early times, in which gross, sensual, corrupting delights were supposed to make the felicity of the saints. This seems to have been derived from Cerinthus, and thence to have passed on to other heretics. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 28.

<sup>1</sup> Iren. lib. v. 30.



Revelation, promise happy times, shall be accomplished.<sup>1</sup>

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## PART VII.

### SECTION V.

*Satan loosed, deceiveth the Nations, and is cast into the burning Lake.*

#### CHAP. XX. ver. 7—10.

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

<sup>1</sup> An abstracted view of the sentiments of the ancients on this difficult, and as yet obscure subject, may be seen in Bishop Newton's Dissertations, vol. iii. 329—343, 8vo.; and of the moderns, in Lowman's Paraphrase and notes on Rev. p. 242—248. Some ingenious and useful hints are suggested in Mr. Kett's last volume on Prophecy. And a comprehensive, learned, and very judicious view of the whole subject may be read in Mr. Gray's (now Lord Bishop of Bristol) Discourse on Rev. xx. 4—6. It is remarkable, that Dr. Whitby, who had declined to comment on the Apocalypse, assigning as his motive, that he felt himself unqualified for such a work, has ventured to explain this particular prediction of the Millennium; which being, as all agree, a prophecy yet unfulfilled, is of all others the most difficult. Yet, his Treatise on the true Millennium, may be perused with advantage. But, as it plainly appears that no one who lived before the completion of the prophecies of the Seals, the Trumpets, or the Harlot of Babylon, however learned and sagacious, was able to penetrate through the veil of these mysteries, nor was any progress made in assorting these prophecies, until the historical events fulfilling them appeared; so, to the events alone are we to look with confidence for the complete illustration of these predictions. We can at present collect from them with safety, only general notions and assurances. Such, however, are sufficient to support our faith, if not to gratify our curiosity.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

AFTER the grand period of the Millennium, so favourable to the Christian cause, shall have come to its end, another apostasy shall unhappily take place. This is expressed figuratively, by Satan being again loosed, to deceive the nations. This new rebellion against the laws of God, and against the easy yoke of the Redeemer, is of formidable extent. The four corners of the earth, (that is, the nations of the whole earth,<sup>1</sup>) are engaged in it. It is an apostasy of a new kind; different at least from the former, in which the beast and false prophet were Satan's instruments of mischief. Beyond this we have little ground of conjecture. The enemies of the Christian Church, numerous as the sands upon the seashore, surround the camp of the saints, which is represented as in a state of siege. But the extinction of these enemies shall be sudden, miraculous, and complete. They shall be destroyed by fire, by fire from heaven, that is, miraculously and utterly.<sup>2</sup>

This description is conformable to other ancient prophecies, still remaining to be fulfilled, or which have received only a partial and typical completion. Such are Isaiah lxiii. lxvi.; Joel iii.; Ezek. xxxviii. and xxxix.; which is the last prophecy in the book,<sup>3</sup> and is said expressly to be of the latter days. Gog and Magog will be found to signify the nations; those

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> See note, ch. xvii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Excepting the exhibition of the temple, which being a subject entire of itself, was reckoned by the Jews as an additional book. See Joseph. Ant. Jud. lib. x. c. 6.

which were most distant, and yet hostile to the Church.<sup>1</sup> On all these prophecies, evidently not yet fulfilled, little can be conjectured with safety. They are to be handed down to the Church of the latter days, even as those prophecies, which we have seen fulfilled have been delivered to us; and with this consolation, that this “overflowing of iniquity,” whenever it arrives, shall be miraculously and completely terminated. (Ezek. xxxix. 6; Isa. xlvii. 13, 14; xxxiii. 14.) And this is the last successful effort of Satan against the Church. He is then consigned to his *eternal* prison.

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## PART VII.

### SECTION VI.

#### *The Judgment.*

CHAP. XX. ver. 11 to the end.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

THE Christian Church being now triumphant over its enemies, and the instigator of all mischief being

<sup>1</sup> See Mede's Works, p. 280; Abp. Newcome on Ezekiel xxxviii. 2; also Lowth on the same passage.

himself eternally banished, there is no more warfare to relate. Nothing remains but to describe that general judgment, which shall render to every man according to his works; when, immortality succeeding to mortality, death, that “last enemy, shall be destroyed.” (1 Cor. xv. 26.) The appearance of the great Judge, before whose “presence the earth and the heaven are seen to flee away;” at whose approach, the former scenery, (as described in ch. iv. &c.) vanishes, and the process of the tribunal, by which the books of crimination and of life are opened, are shortly and sublimely related: and the language, though figurative, being conformable to other passages foretelling this great event, is of easy and obvious interpretation.<sup>1</sup> We may perhaps except from this description ver. 14, wherein death and hell are said to be cast into the lake of fire, called the second death. But this second death will be found explained in note, ch. ii. 11.

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## PART VII.

### SECTION VII.

#### *The New Creation.*

##### CHAP. xxi. ver. 1—8.

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down

<sup>1</sup> Compare Mal. iii. 16, iv. 1; Job xxi. 30; Ps. ix. 17; Dan. vii. 9; xii. 2; Isa. xxviii. 14—19; Matt. xiii. 41, 42; Mark ix. 44; 1 Cor. xv.; Phil. iii. 21; 1 Thess. iv. 16; 2 Thess. i. 7—10; 2 Tim. i. 10; Heb. ii. 14; 1 Pet. iii. 7, 10; Jude 14, 15; also Rev. i. 14, 18; iii. 5; iv. 2, 3; ii. 11; vi. 8; with the notes thereon.

from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Ver. 1. *And I saw a new heaven, &c.*] The general judgment having taken place, and the heavens and earth passed away, as described in ch. xx. 11, and also by St. Peter, (2 Pet. iii.) there follow (as mentioned also by the same apostle,) “new heavens and a new earth,” foretold likewise by Isaiah, (ch. lxxv. and lxxvi.) to which St. Peter seems to refer, as to a prophecy unfulfilled. But the apocalyptic prophecy does not rest only upon the general assurance given by former prophets; it proceeds to a more particular description. It presents to us “the new city, the New Jerusalem,” “the bride, the spouse” of Christ. Under these images, which are perfectly concordant with many other texts of Scripture, (see Eph. ii. 19, &c.; Gal. iv. 26; Heb. xii. 22, &c.; viii. 2; ix. 11; xi. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 5; iii. 13, &c.; 1 Cor. iii. 9.) is represented that assembly of the saints, purified from sin; that “glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle,” which is here con-



trusted with the great, the impure, idolatrous city, which has been destroyed. They are both of them exhibited, first as women, then as cities; which symbols are convertible.<sup>1</sup> But the first woman is an impure harlot. The second is a virgin bride, fit for her Lord. The first city is idolatrous and wicked, a very Babylon; the second is “the holy city,” the new Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> under which symbol she is more especially represented in the remaining part of this chapter.

Ib. *There was no more sea.*] This should be translated *the sea is no more*. Some of the commentators have perplexed themselves to find a particular representation signified in this passage, under the emblem of *the sea*. It seems to me, that none such is to be looked for. The heaven, the earth, and the sea, (with sometimes, the rivers and fountains,) in scriptural idea, compose the world.<sup>3</sup> These all pass away; “all things are made new.” The old translation stands corrected so as to accord with this notion; yet not for that reason; but because the language of the original seemed evidently to require it.

Ver. 3. *And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying—*] Preparatory to almost every change which has taken place in prophecy, for the advancement of religion, and the consequent happiness of man, songs of joy from the sacred chorus in heaven, have proclaimed the revolution, before it has been

<sup>1</sup> See notes, ch. xvii. 1; xix. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> See note, ch. iii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> See note, ch. viii. 7. “In six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is:” Exod. xx. As these component parts are mentioned at the creation, so again at the dissolution, of the world.

exhibited in the scenery. The heavenly Jerusalem is descending, and soon will be seen from a nearer point of view. Meanwhile, the happy change is sublimely described: the heavenly voice expresses most eloquently that divine state of felicity, to which redeemed man may, by the grace of God, attain. It is beyond the power of human imagination to comprehend the particulars in which it consists. It is therefore described only by negatives. There shall be *no* sorrow, *no* pain, *no* death; none of those evils which embitter this mortal life. And this description is confirmed by the great Judge and Creator, who sitteth upon the throne: “behold,” says he, “I make all things *new*.”

Ver. 5. *Write; for these words are true and worthy of belief.*] At the conclusion of the vision which contained the judgment of Babylon, (ch. xix. 9,) the angel, who accompanied the prophet during that vision, had addressed him in nearly the same words.<sup>1</sup> But the present scene is that, in which the Son of God, who had appeared at the commencement of the prophecy, addresses the prophet for *the last time*. He addresses him from his glorious throne, where, having judged the dead, and caused the old heavens and earth to vanish away, he creates a new heaven and a new earth, and therein a new and heavenly city, to be the blissful habitation of his servants. He now therefore renews his command to the prophet, to write what he had seen.<sup>2</sup> And he assures him, and through him the Church, that these visions are to be believed, and to be relied upon as the words of God. He then declares the prophecy to be brought to its conclusion. It concludes with the new creation. The enemies of Christ are now

<sup>1</sup> See the note, which is intended to show their purport.

<sup>2</sup> As in ch. i. 19.

finally subdued. Their opposition was the grand argument of the book. It ends when this resistance is no more. The triumphant Messiah concludes his address, as he had begun it, (in chapter i. 8, 18,) with such a representation of his eternal power and glory, as must induce his followers to trust in him. He then renews his promises of inestimable rewards,<sup>1</sup> to those who shall diligently seek them; and his denunciations of eternal punishments, to those who pursue the wages of sin. The sins specified in the eighth verse, are such as have been noted and explained in the progress of this work. But, it may be asked, why are the *cowardly* enumerated in the catalogue of sinners? Can a man help the fearfulness and timidity of his nature? Is not courage, in a great degree, a constitutional virtue? To this it may be answered, that every Christian, in the language of the Scriptures, and especially in that of this book, is accounted a soldier of Christ. As such, he is engaged to fight, (and he undertakes this warfare solemnly at his baptism,) against the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are the agents of iniquity who oppose the Messiah, in these prophetic visions; the dragon, and the beasts. And the courage required to resist these is far from being corporeal and constitutional: for in this cause, the weak and timid sex have produced as many champions and conquerors, as the sex accounted most valiant and robust. Resolution to resist temptation, and to follow faithfully the great Captain of Salvation through difficulties and trials is, more or less, in the power of every one; and what is deficient in human infirmity, will be made strong, and equal to that which is expected from it, by the grace of God. Therefore, “the cowardly and faithless,” are pro-

<sup>1</sup> As in chapters ii. and iii.

perly classed together in this passage, and with the sinners, who are of that kind and description which were seen to apostatise from the Christian religion, in times of temptation and persecution; especially during the prevalency of the Gnostic doctrines, which encouraged all these enormities, and had begun to exhibit its evil tendency when this prophecy was published.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mosheim, de Reb. Christ. ante Cōnst. Mag. Sæc. ii. sect xli.

## PART VIII.

## SECTION I.

*The Bride, or New Jerusalem.*

CHAP. xxi. ver. 9, to the end. CHAP. xxii. ver. 1—5.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal;

12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13 On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he that talked with me, had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

16 And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal.

17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;



20 The fifth, a sardonyx ; the sixth, a sardius ; the seventh, a chrysolite ; the eighth, a beryl ; the ninth, a topaz ; the tenth, a chryso-prasus ; the eleventh, a jacinth ; the twelfth, an amethyst.

21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls ; every several gate was one pearl : and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

22 And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it.

23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

24 And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it : and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day : for there shall be no night there.

26 And they shall bring the honour and glory of the nations into it.

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie : but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it : and his servants shall serve him.

4 And they shall see his face : and his name shall be in their foreheads.

5 And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for, the Lord God giveth them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The main prophecy had already come to its conclusion.<sup>1</sup> He who opened it in the first chapter, had brought it to its final period in this. The end of all worldly things is succeeded by the new creation : and “ the holy city, the new Jerusalem,” had been exhibited, as “ descending from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her hus-

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. xxi. 5.

band.” But a nearer and more particular view of this blissful seat was desirable; and therefore, when the scene was closed, and the throne no longer in view, one of the angels, who had exhibited to the prophet the harlot, the corrupt city, Babylon, condescendingly offers to show him a nearer exhibition of the bride, the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus the contrast between the two is more effectually shown; and therefore this vision, like that of the seventeenth chapter, seems to stand apart from the rest, and is to be accounted as an episode. Therefore the scene, on which it is represented, is also apart. As, in the seventeenth chapter, the angel had transported the prophet into the wilderness, there to behold the harlot, the corrupt city; so he now conveys him in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain, a place of eminent power and worship,<sup>1</sup> to behold the Christian Church, perfect and triumphant, after the renovation of all things.

Ver. 11. *And her splendour like a most precious stone.*] Here follows a very gorgeous description of the new city, which, conformably to the prophecy of Isaiah, (ch. liv. 11, 12,) is built of precious stones, with a superb costliness beyond the reach of earthly potentates. The gems, employed to decorate this glorious city, are such as have ever been in the highest request in the eastern regions which produce them.<sup>2</sup> Upon the

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. viii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Is. lx. The description of most of these, as given by the ancient writers, may be seen in Pliny's Natural History. See also Dionysii Orbis Descriptio, cap. India; and in works of more modern date, —in Thunburgh's Travels, vol. iv. p. 218, &c.—The Crystal Jasper of ver. 11 is described by Pliny, lib. xxxvii. c. 8, 9.

The connexion of these two gems may be seen in these lines:

Τεμνοῖς κρυσταλλοῦ καθαρὸν λίθον, οἷα τε παχύνῃ  
Χειμερίην· θηεῖς δὲ καὶ ὕδατοῦ ἔσαν ἰασπιν.

parallel passage in Isaiah, Bishop Lowth has written this judicious observation: "These seem to be general images to express beauty, magnificence, purity, strength, and solidity, agreeably to the ideas of eastern nations; and to have never been intended to be strictly scrutinized, or minutely and particularly explained, as if they had each of them some moral and precise meaning." Nothing more seems intended than to afford some general, but lofty and sublime notion of the splendour of this superb and heavenly mansion, which the apostle Paul, following the words of the prophet Isaiah, (1 Cor. ii. 9; Isa. lxiv. 4.) represents to be beyond conception.<sup>1</sup> And to describe the building, as composed of the very richest and most costly materials, yet such as few persons have seen, or can imagine,

Here the clear crystal, like the winter's ice,  
You cut; and with it find the watery jasper.  
Dionysii Perig. lin. 781.

And again, line 724:

Φυεὶ δὲ κρυστάλλον, ἰδ' ἡῤῥέουσσαν ἱάσπιν.

And in these lines of the same author, are described several of the precious stones, which are figuratively employed to build the New Jerusalem:

Ἄλλοι δ' ἰχνεύουσιν ἐπὶ προβολῆσιν ἀναυρῶν  
Ἡποῦ βηρυλλοῦ γλαυκῆν λίθον, ἢ ἀδάμαντα  
Μαρμαίροντ', ἢ χλωρὰ διανγαζούσαν ἱάσπιν,  
Ἡ γλαυκίοντα λίθον καθαροῖο τοπαζοῦ,  
Καὶ γλυκερὴν ἀμεθυστον ὑπηρεμα πορφυρεούσαν. 1118—1123.

Some trace among the torrents' rifted beds  
The clear, blue beryl, or resplendent diamond,  
Or green pellucid jasper, or pure topaz,  
Or the mild, gently-purpling amethyst.

<sup>1</sup> "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him."

is figuratively to say the same thing.<sup>1</sup> Yet, that the reader may not confine his notions to earthly splendour only, at the twelve gates are twelve angels, and on each of the gates is inscribed a name of a tribe of Israel;<sup>2</sup> and the foundation is raised (as in Eph. ii. 20; and 1 Pet. ii. 5,) “on the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” Every thing unclean and faulty is excluded from this city; whence we may deduce an additional proof that this prophecy is not to have its final completion in this world, where the good and the bad, the wheat and the tares, are to grow together until “the end,” (Matt. xiii. 40.) Some commentators have been led to a different interpretation, by observing that the new city descends from heaven, and is therefore, say they, upon earth: but this objection will be completely removed, by remarking that the earth, to which the heavenly Jerusalem descends, is not the earth we now inhabit. A new heaven and a new earth are produced;—“Behold,” says the Creator, “I make all things new,” (ch. xx. 11; xxi. 1, 4, 5.) This vision therefore appears to exhibit the future mansions of the blessed. It succeeds the general judgment of the dead; and to no other mansion can in any wise be applied the glorious representation which describes the favoured inhabitants admitted to see “the face of God,”<sup>3</sup> and reigning for ever and ever, (ch. xxii. 4, 5.) Such is the city alluded to by the apostle to the Hebrews, who, speaking of this world, says, “here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come,” (Heb. xi. 10, 16; xii. 22.) Agreeably to which, in this prophecy it is declared that there is “here no temple.”

<sup>1</sup> This figurative language thus applied, may be seen by consulting Lam. iv. 1—7; and 1 Cor. iii. 12—15.

<sup>2</sup> See note, ch. vii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Compare 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

In this world, as now constituted, religion cannot subsist without her temples, without some external mode of bringing men to God. But when “just men, made perfect, see face to face” the glories of their God, faith and hope, on which the worship is founded, being absorbed in reality, the nearer presence of the Deity will supersede the use of a temple. The superior light and knowledge, emanating from his glorious presence, will remove darkness and error, and the necessity of that stated worship, which is the ordinary means of preventing man from being estranged from his Maker. Here “we know in part, and prophesy in part;” that is, imperfectly: “but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.”<sup>1</sup>

Chap. xxii. Ver. 1. *And he shewed me a river of water of Life, &c.*] In a thirsty soil and hot climate, like that of Palestine, where most of the prophecies were delivered, water is a necessary means of fructification; and the practice of irrigation is much used in agriculture. But as water is to the soil, supplying health and vigour to its languid plants, so is the influence of God’s Holy Spirit to the human soul, when sinking in its spiritual progress. Thus refreshed, the soul brings forth “fruits unto holiness, and the end everlasting life,” (Rom. vi. 22.) Water is therefore used, in Scripture, as the symbols of such supplies of divine grace, (Isaiah viii. 6; xxx. 25; xxxii. 20; xxxv. 6, 7; xli. 17; xlix. 9; xliii. 20; lv. 1; liv. 13; lvii. 11; Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13; Ezek. xlvii. 2; Joel iii. 18; Zech. xiii. 1; xiv.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.—Many passages of the ancient prophets, some of which may have been typically or partially fulfilled, seem to belong to these times, and still to await their final completion. Isaiah iv. 3—6; xxv. 6—9; lx; lxi. 10; lxvi. 20—24; Ezek. xl; xliii. 7; xlvii. 1—5—12; xlviii. 20, 35.



8; John iv. 13, 14; vii. 38, 39.) The waters of the river of Life proceed from the throne of God, and of the Lamb; <sup>1</sup> from the fountain of all mercy; and the salutary streams support the tree of Life, which is to be seen in this Paradise regained, a never-failing source of immortality. The fruit, continually renewing, supports the body to eternal life; whilst the leaves (that no part may be unserviceable) are a balm or healing application for the wounds of sin, to those of the nations who had lived in ignorance of the divine laws, but now partake the benefits of redemption.

The remaining expressions describing this blissful state, will be found explained under note, ch. i. 16; ii. 10; iii. 22.

Ver. 2.] Some MSS., says Dr. Jortin, “instead of “*εντευθεν και εντευθεν*, read *εντευθεν και εκειθεν*’ sed nil opus.” And he quotes *ενθεν και ενθεν*, as used by Aristotle, Herodotus, Sophocles, and in Const. Apost.; and observes, “Nothing is more common than *ενθα και ενθα*: and hinc et hinc, in the Latin poets.” And he remarks, that the very same expression is used by St. John, in his Gospel, ch. xix. 18.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Discourses on the Christian Religion, p. 210. 2d edit.

## PART VIII.

## SECTION II.

*The Conclusion.*

CHAP. XXII. ver. 6, to the end.

6 And he said unto me; These sayings are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

9 Then saith he unto me; See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me; Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for, the time is at hand.

11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 And behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without, are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20 He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Ver. 6. *And he said unto me, &c.*] The angel commissioned to exhibit this closing scene of the prophecy, being now about to depart, addresses the prophet with some short sentences, directing the use and application of what had been exhibited.

First:—Ver. 6. The vision may be confidently relied on, as representing events soon to be disclosed.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly:—Ver. 7. A blessing is pronounced on those, who in faith and patience expect the completion of the prophecy, and who direct their lives conformably to such expectation. And here it is observable, that the angel, as ambassador of Christ, to whom the vision in all its parts most certainly appertains,<sup>2</sup> speaks in the august person of his Lord, using his very words: “Behold, I come soon,” (ch. iii. 11 :) words, which being evidently those of the Redeemer, before whom the prophet had prostrated himself without rebuke, (ch. i. 17,) occasion him again to fall prostrate. And now the reproof of chap. xix. 10, is repeated.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See notes, ch. i. 1, 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> See ch. i. 1, and note.

<sup>3</sup> This circumstance may in some measure account for the repetition of this action, if it be such. But there may be some reason to doubt whether the action be repeated, or the description of it only; whether St. John does not merely describe over again his attempt to worship the angel; for it might seem necessary to repeat the description, which positively forbids it, for the benefit of the

Thirdly :—Ver. 10. St. John is ordered to represent this prophecy, not as a sealed book,<sup>1</sup> but as the prediction of a train of events, beginning to take place immediately.<sup>2</sup>

Fourthly :—Ver. 11, 12. According to a mode of speaking used by Ezekiel, (ch. iii. 27,) and by St. Paul, (1 Cor. xiv. 38,) and well explained by Dr. S. Clarke,<sup>3</sup> we are warned, that as we act under this view, (this awful view of the divine judgments,) so shall we experience their effects. We are free to be just or unjust, righteous or wicked, and must abide the consequences of our own determination.

Fifthly :—Ver. 13, 14, 15. The angel again speaks in the person of his Lord, by whom the whole revelation is given, (ch. i. 1,) again declaring himself to be that great transcendent Being “who inhabits eternity,” (Isaiah lvi. 15 ; Micah v. 2 ; note, ch. i. 8;) and in his name pronounces a blessing on those who keep his commandments. Good works performed from the operation of such faith, can alone afford access to that heavenly habitation, from which the wicked<sup>4</sup> shall be excluded.

Sixthly :—Ver. 16. Adverting again to the beginning of the prophecy, the angel declares, in the name of his Lord, that it is given for the edification of

Church, prone to lapse into this kind of idolatry. For he seems in both situations to have been present with the same angel, one belonging to the vials,\* who was employed to show him apart, first the harlot, and then the Bride. It is therefore less likely that the action should be repeated. And in both descriptions, nearly the same expressions are used, and also introduced by the same address of the angel, “These are the true words of God,” &c.

<sup>1</sup> See note, ch. v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See note, ch. i. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Serm. vol. iv. p. 38 ; and vii. p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Dogs ; by which name, as in Phil. iii. 2, “evil workers” are plainly intended.

\* Compare ch. xvii. 1, with ch. xxi. 9.

the Churches, (Note, ch. i. 4.) And the great Giver of the prophecy is described to be both the root and the branch of David, (Isaiah xi. 1.) He is a “stem of Jesse;” in his human character, appearing as “the son of David,” the Messiah expected of that stem: but in his divine character, partaking of the divine nature, he is infinitely more; he is the root and foundation, the cause and the means of that salvation which is denominated “the sure mercies of David.” He is that bright morning star, which now gives considerable light to the world after a long night of ignorance and superstition; and to those who love such light, a certain earnest and prelude of increasing knowledge and glory, “shining forth unto perfect day.”

Seventhly:—Ver. 17. He describes the Holy Spirit as inviting all men to partake the blessings prepared for them, and now exhibited under the symbol of the bride, or heavenly Jerusalem. And “he who heareth,” he who hath been instructed in the saving truths of the Gospel, is called upon to invite others to participate in its advantages, which are “freely bestowed on all whom our Lord shall call,” (Acts ii. 39.) But to him “who heareth,” who esteemeth himself instructed in the knowledge of the Gospel, and especially in the prophecies of this book, an awful command, under severe sanctions, is added; that he teach others no other things, than those which are written therein; “not diminishing therefrom, nor adding aught thereto,” (Deut. xii. 32; 2 Cor. iii. 6.) From the history of the times, following the publication of the Apocalypse, we collect the necessity of this prophetic injunction. For, in the second century, many spurious works, falsely attributed to apostles of Christ, were circulated in the Christian world. And in imitation of this Revelation of St. John, Revelations of St.



Peter, of St. Paul, of St. Thomas, and of others, were fabricated. The threatenings here denounced against such fabricators, or those who shall attempt additions or alterations in this inspired work, united to that reverential care with which the fathers of the Church preserved the true readings of the sacred books, seem to have preserved this prophecy free from material interpolation.

Eighthly :—Our Lord concludes the book, as he had begun it, with this interesting declaration ;—“ Surely I come soon.”

To every mortal, short is the time leading to that awful instant, when he “ shall stand before the presence of God !” Be it our endeavour, by the assistance of his Holy Spirit, so to direct our thoughts and actions, that we may have confidence in our Redeemer, and be of the number of those who “ love his appearing !” (2 Tim. iv. 8.) Thus may we be enabled cordially to unite with the beloved apostle in his concluding prayer ; “ Amen ; so be it ; come, Lord Jesus !”



A P P E N D I X,

IN TWO PARTS;

REFERRED TO IN PAGES 293, 294, 295, OF THE  
PRECEDING WORK.

# PART I.

*Comparison of the Prophecies of Daniel, of St. Paul, and of the Apocalypse, alluded to in p. 294 of this work.*

DAN. vii. 8, 24, 25; 21. 11.

Ἰδου, κερᾶς ἕτερον μικρον ἀνεβη ἐν μεσῷ αὐτῶν· καὶ ἰδου, ὀφθαλμοὶ ὡσεὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῷ κερᾷ τὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ στομα λαλοῦν μεγάλα.

Ὅς ὑπεροίσει κακοὺς πάντας τοὺς ἐμπροσθεν, καὶ τρεῖς βασιλεῖς ταπεινώσει· καὶ λόγους πρὸς τὸν ὑψίστον λαλήσει, καὶ τοὺς ἁγίους ὑψίστου παλαιώσει, καὶ ὑπονοήσει τὸν ἀλλοιωταὶ καιροὺς καὶ νόμον· — καὶ δοθήσεται ἐν χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ἕως καιροῦ καὶ καιρῶν καὶ γε ἡμῶν καιρῶν.

Καὶ τὸ κερᾶς ἐκεῖνο ἔποιε πολλοὺς μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων, καὶ ἰσχυσέτο πρὸς αὐτοὺς.

REV. xiii. 11—18; xix. 20, 21.

11. — αλλο θῆριον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς, καὶ εἶχε κερᾶτα δύο ὅμοια ἄρνι· καὶ ἔλαλει ὡς δράκων.

12. Καὶ τὴν ἔξουσίαν τοῦ πρώτου θῆριου πᾶσαν ποιεῖ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ.

Καὶ ποιεῖ τὴν γῆν καὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐν αὐτῇ, ἵνα προσκυνήσωσι τὸ θῆριον τὸ πρῶτον οὐ ἔθεραπευθῇ ἢ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ.

13. Καὶ ποιεῖ σημεῖα μεγάλα, ἵνα καὶ πῶς ποῦν καταβαίνειν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

14. Καὶ παντὰ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς δια τα σημεῖα, ἃ ἔδοθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θῆριου· λέγων τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ποιῆσαι εἰκόνα τῷ θῆρι, ὃ ἔχει τὴν πληγὴν τῆς μαχαίρας, καὶ ἔζησε.

2 THESS. ii. 3—5, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Ὁ ἀνθρώπος τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, — ἐν πάσῃ ἀπατῇ τῆς ἀδικίας, — ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεροίκοις ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θῆρον ἢ σέβασμα, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ καθίσει ἀποδεκνύντα αὐτόν, ὅτι ἐστὶ θῆος.

Οὐ ἐστὶν ἡ παρουσία κατ' ἐνεργίαν τοῦ σατανᾶ, ἐν πάσῃ δυναμει, καὶ σημείοις, καὶ τέρασι ψευδούς.

— ἡ ἀποστασία — εἰς τὸ πιστεῖν αὐτοὺς τῷ ψευδεῖ.

15. Καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ δοῦναι πνεῦμα τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ  
 Θερίου, ἵνα καὶ λαλήσῃ ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ Θερίου,  
 καὶ ποιήσῃ, ὅσοι ἀν μὴ προσκυνήσωσι τὴν  
 εἰκόνα τοῦ Θερίου, ἵνα ἀποκτανθῶσι.

16. Καὶ ποιεῖ πάντας, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς  
 μεγάλους, καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους καὶ τοὺς πτω-  
 χους, καὶ τοὺς ἐλευθεροὺς καὶ τοὺς δούλους,  
 ἵνα δώσιν αὐτοῖς χάραγμα ἐπὶ τῆς χειρὸς  
 αὐτῶν τῆς δεξιᾶς, ἡ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν.

17. Καὶ ἵνα μὴ τις δυνήται ἀγοράσαι· κ. τ. λ.

Ἔως ἀνῆρθεν τὸ Θέριον καὶ  
 ἀπώλετο, καὶ τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ  
 ἐδόθη εἰς κανσὴν πυρός·

Chap. xix. 20. Καὶ ἐπιασθὲν τὸ Θέριον, καὶ  
 ὁ μετ' αὐτῷ ψευδοπροφήτης ὁ ποιήσας τὰ  
 σημεῖα· κ. τ. λ.—ζῶντες ἐβλήθησαν οἱ δύο  
 εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός τὴν κατομένην ἐν  
 τῷ θείῳ.

Ὁν ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἀναλῶσει τῷ  
 πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ,  
 καὶ καταργήσει τὴν ἐπιφάνειάν τὴν  
 παρουσίας αὐτοῦ.

21. — οἱ λοιποὶ ἐπεκτανθήσαν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ  
 τοῦ καθήμενου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου, τῇ ἐξελθούσῃ ἐκ  
 τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ.



In comparing these descriptions of Antichrist we must observe, that the prophecy of Daniel is the most general, and the most obscure of the three. This is agreeable to the analogy of prophetic Scripture, which is found to afford additional information, as it approaches nearer to the times foretold.<sup>1</sup> The prophecy of the Apocalypse exhibits a nearer view of the common subject, and discovers objects which had not been discerned before; while the words of St. Paul may be taken as a comment on those of Daniel; and, being the comment of an inspired writer, may be considered at the same time as illustrating, by the Holy Spirit, the prophecy of the Apocalypse. The little horn, which, in the vision of Daniel, had appeared somewhat more than a common horn, (for it had eyes, and a mouth, and spake, and fought, and conquered,) upon a nearer view, as presented to the apocalyptic prophet, becomes a separate wild beast; and yet, between him and the other wild beast, there is, as in the prophecy of Daniel, a very close connexion and resemblance. He exerciseth all the power of the first beast; renders him an object of worship; becomes great through his influence; partakes all his fortunes; and perishes with him at the last.

This nearer view discovers to us also the two-fold ecclesiastical power which Antichrist was to establish, and which did not appear distinctly at the distance at which it was shown to Daniel.<sup>2</sup> This me-

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Lowth's *Prælect.* xx. p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Yet it is remarkable, that the three horns rooted up, the three kingdoms destroyed by the little horn, though represented by Daniel, are not at all noticed in the vision seen by St. John. This part of the prophecy of Daniel appears to me to be of difficult solution. The three kingdoms, which by modern expositors are assigned for this purpose, "the exarchate of Ravenna, the kingdom of the Lombards, the state of Rome," (Bishop Newton, &c. &c.) taken all together, make so petty a territory, that they seem to compose only

thod of sacred prophecy, wherein one vision, under the same or different imagery, enlarges upon another vision, and refers to and illustrates the same original archetype, may be frequently observed. Instances occur continually in the visions of Daniel, “ which, as Sir Isaac Newton remarks, “ all relate to one another, every following prophecy adding somewhat new to the former.”<sup>1</sup> The vision of the beasts is only that of the image enlarged, yet represented under other symbols ; and thus the vision of Antichrist, in the Apocalypse, is no more different from those of Daniel, than those of Daniel are from each other. All look to the same times, all are from the same sacred inspiration, and unfold and confirm each other.

a part of one of those ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire, (whether we consider either the whole of it, or the western part only,) was divided. Yet if these be the kingdoms, they belong to one horn only, of the second apocalyptic beast, and to that horn which is to be viewed more particularly in ch. xvii. : and thus perhaps in some degree the omission is to be accounted for.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Isaac Newton on Daniel, part i. ch. 3.

## PART II.

*Comparison of Mahometism with Popery, alluded to in p. 295.*

THE Mahometan, as well as the Papal, was no new religion, but a corruption of that which we acknowledge to have been revealed to Adam, to Abraham, to Moses and the prophets, and finally completed in our Lord Jesus Christ. For Mahomet admitted, as the basis of his superstructure, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, alleging only that they had been corrupted in those places, which he found it convenient to frame anew.<sup>1</sup> So the Christians received him as a prophet, at the time of his flight from Mecca.<sup>2</sup> And without this apostasy of the Christians, which he artfully fomented and always expected,<sup>3</sup> his daring schemes must have failed. The king of Ethiopia and his subjects were converted to Mahometism by considering it as a *divine addition* to the Christian religion.<sup>4</sup> The Christians were uniformly invited to embrace Mahometism as a more perfect divine revelation. They, with the Jews, as believing the foundations of the same revelations, were at first treated with peculiar lenity and respect. They were called the people of the book, and as such, were tolerated in the profession of their respective religions, on paying a moderate tribute,

<sup>1</sup> Koran, ch. iii. iv. v, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Prideaux, *Life of Mahomet*, pp. 76, 161.

<sup>3</sup> Prideaux, p. 76; 5th ch. of the Koran.

<sup>4</sup> Boulanvilliers, *Vie de Mahomed*, p. 349.

while the Harbii, that is, the idolaters and atheists, were extirpated.<sup>1</sup> Hence Mahometism has been frequently accounted a Christian heresy;<sup>2</sup> and, as it had its origin in Christianity, so to Christ it looks in the end: for, according to the creed of the Mahometans, Jesus is expected to descend to earth, to embrace the religion of Mahomet, to slay antichrist, and to reign with his saints.<sup>3</sup> And not only does Mahometism resemble Popery, as one horn of the same beast does another in these characters of an apostate church; but the resemblance is equally complete in those marks of which the papal writers<sup>4</sup> boast, as characteristic of their only true church; amplitude, duration, temporal prosperity. If these are marks of the true church, both these usurpations have equally enjoyed them. And as their immense secular power and dominion arose and was established nearly at the same time, so from the same æra, the declension of that power is to be dated. The latter end of the seventeenth century, saw the tide of prosperity ebbing apace in both.<sup>5</sup> In short, both these are religious powers; or, to speak more justly, and according to the prophecy, *worldly* powers masked under a religious semblance; they pretend their rights from religion; and support them by the secular sword, which both have wielded with oppressive violence. Both claim their authority originally from the same source, from the Christian religion; the one as vicar and representative of Christ; the other, by commission from the Father of Christ,

<sup>1</sup> Reland and Höttinger, quoted by Gibbon, ch. li.

<sup>2</sup> See the proofs of this in p. 422.

<sup>3</sup> Sale's Koran, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup> Bellarmine, &c. &c.

<sup>5</sup> It has been observed, that no successful efforts have been made either by the Mahometans or Papists to extend their influence and dominion, from the peace of Ryswick, in 1697, followed by that of Carlowitz in 1699.

acknowledging the revelation given to the Son, but pretending to restore it to an original purity. Both infringe Christian liberty, by the arbitrary introduction of burthensome and unauthorized ceremonies ; both attack and render nugatory that most essential part of Christianity, the mediatorial office of our Lord ; the one when the pretended prophet took it upon himself ; the other, when the pretended vicar transferred it to angels and departed saints.

The Mahometan apostasy may therefore fairly stand by the side of the papal, as forming one horn of the second antichristian beast. And as this will be more readily admitted by those who have considered, (as Dr. Benson by his concession seems to have done,) its right to the name and title of a Christian heresy or apostasy, I will here subjoin some quotations tending to illustrate this fact, which is not commonly seen or acknowledged :

“ Mahomet did not pretend to deliver any *new* religion, but to revive the old one.<sup>1</sup> He allowed both the Old and New Testament, and that both Moses and Jesus were prophets sent from God ;<sup>2</sup> that Jesus, son of Mary, is the *word*, and a Spirit sent from God, a Redeemer of all that believe in him.”<sup>3</sup> Mahomet represents himself as the Paraclete or Comforter sent by Jesus Christ ; (John xvi. 7.)<sup>4</sup> So, in Mahomet’s ascent to heaven, as invented in the Koran, while the patriarchs and prophets confess their inferiority to him by entreating his prayers, in the seventh heaven he sees Jesus, whose superiority the false prophet acknowledges by commending himself to *his* prayers.<sup>5</sup> “ Faith in the

<sup>1</sup> Prideaux, Life of Mahomet, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Sale’s Koran, p. 19, 80, 65. Ockley’s History of Saracens, ii.

<sup>4</sup> Koran, p. 165.

<sup>5</sup> Sale’s Koran, ch. 17. Prideaux’ Life of Mahomet, p. 55.



divine books is a necessary article of the Mahometan creed; and among these is the gospel given to Issa or Jesus, which they assert to be corrupted by the Christians.”<sup>1</sup> “If any Jew is willing to become a Mahometan, he must first believe in Christ: and this question is asked him, Dost thou believe that Christ was born of a virgin, by the blast (i. e. inspiration) of God, and that he was the last of the Jewish Prophets.” If he answers in the affirmative, he is made a Mahometan.<sup>2</sup> “Mahomet arose to establish a new religion, which came pretty near the Jewish, and was not entirely different from that of several sects of Christians, which got him a great many followers.”<sup>3</sup>—“*Fassus impostor (scil. Muhammedes) Jesum de virgine Mariâ natum, Messiam, verbum Dei cœlitus missum, Dei Spiritum, miraculis evangelicis clarum, prophetam Dei, qui evangelium tradiderit, ac docuit salutis viam, qui venturus ad judicium sit, et destructurus antichristum, et conversurus Judæos, &c. Sic apostolis Christi credendum docuit ut evangelio Christi, ac legi Mosis et prophetis omnibus. Sic de Christianis æquius quàm de Judæis sensit, quos et benignè habuit; unde illud Muhammedis apud Elmacinum, qui Christianum opprimit, adversarium eum habebit die judicii; qui Christiano nocet, mihi nocet, &c.*”<sup>4</sup> Thus also the Mahometan writers, when speaking of him, say, “*jussit quoque credere veritatem prophetarum et apostolorum;—item Christum filium Mariæ Dei esse et verbum ejus atque apostolum;*”<sup>5</sup> and even at this day they honour what we call the Christian religion, next to their own.<sup>6</sup> “Mahome-

<sup>1</sup> Reland on the Mahometan Religion, pref. p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Leibnitz's Letter, 1706.

<sup>4</sup> Spanhemii Introd. ad Hist. Sæc. vii. p. 609.

<sup>5</sup> Elmacini Hist. Saracen. p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

tism began as a Christian heresy, acknowledging Christ for a Prophet, a greater than Moses, born of a virgin, the Word of God.”—Alcoran, v. 27.<sup>1</sup> Sale asserts the Mahometan religion to be not only a Christian heresy, but an “improvement upon the very corrupt idolatrous system of the Jews and Christians of those times.”<sup>2</sup> Joseph Mede affirms, that the Mahometans are nearer to Christianity than many of the ancient heresies, the Cerinthians, Gnostics, Manichees.<sup>3</sup> “Whatever good is to be found in the Mahometan religion, (and some good doctrines and precepts there undeniably are in it,) is in no small measure owing to Christianity: for, Mahometism is a borrowed system, made up for the most part of Judaism and Christianity; and, if it be considered in the most favourable view, might possibly be accounted a sort of Christian heresy. If the gospel had never been preached, it may be questioned whether Mahometism would have existed.”<sup>4</sup>

“The Musselmans are already a sort of heterodox Christians; they are Christians, if Locke reasons justly, because they firmly believe the immaculate conception, divine character, and miracles of the Messiah; but they are heterodox in denying vehemently his character of Son, and his equality, as God, with the Father, of whose unity and attributes they entertain and express the most awful ideas, while they consider our doctrine as perfect blasphemy, and insist that our copies of the Scriptures have been corrupted both by Jews and Christians.”<sup>5</sup>

These are such testimonies as have occurred to

<sup>1</sup> Ricaut, Ottoman Empire, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> Prelim. p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Works, p. 645.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Jortin's first Charge.

<sup>5</sup> Sir William Jones, in the Asiatic Dissertations, vol. i. p. 63.

me in a no very extensive course of reading. They are derived from authors, who for the most part enjoyed favourable opportunities of examining the Mahometan tenets; and they exhibit that religion as rising upon the basis of true religion, corrupted, even like the papal, to serve the purposes of a worldly and diabolical tyranny. In the Mahometan religion are these articles, all evidently derived from the Christian, and constituting in it a great superiority above any thing that paganism or mere philosophy have been able to produce: the belief of the existence of one all-wise, all-good, all-powerful God; of the immortality of the soul; of future rewards and punishments to be distributed by Jesus; of the acceptance of prayer, of self-humiliation, of almsgiving; of the obligation to morality in almost all its branches. Take from Mahometism one article, in which it differs from all religions generally admitted to be Christian, *the belief of Mahomet's divine mission*; and little will then be found in it which may not be discovered in the profession of many acknowledged Christians. Nay, perhaps it may appear, that the creeds of two bodies of Christians will supply every thing which is to be found in Mahometism, excepting belief in the pretended prophet of Mecca.

The first article of the Mahometan creed, is the *Unity of God*.—"The Christians," said Mahomet, "have fallen into error, corrupting this dogma by the doctrine of the Trinity; and God, who would not leave the essential truths without testimony, sent his prophet to re-establish them."<sup>1</sup> The reverend, learned, and acute Charles Leslie, in his *Truth of Christianity demonstrated*, having shown in what manner Mahometism sprung out of Arianism, and is connected with Socinianism, adds, "So that in

<sup>1</sup> Vide Abulfaragius, apud Pocock, page 30, in notis ad Spec. Hist. Arab. Et Aslscharestanus, ap. eund. p. 52, 274—292.

strictness, I should not have reckoned Mahometism as one of the four religions of the world, but as *one of the heresies of Christianity*; but because, of its great name, and its having spread so far in the world by the conquests of Mahomet and his followers, and that it is vulgarly understood to be a distinct religion of itself,—therefore I have considered it as such.”<sup>1</sup> But the peculiar profession of this unity, together with the persuasion that the doctrine of the Trinity is a corrupt doctrine, is also the corner-stone of the *Socinian profession*. The agreement in this is so entire between the Mahometans and Socinians, as to make the passage from either of these religions to the other, far from impracticable or difficult. Witness, on the one hand, the history of conversions from Socinianism to the religion of Mahomet, of Adam Neuser, &c. in the sixteenth century;<sup>2</sup> and, on the other, the writings of some modern Socinians, who recommend their religion as removing all obstacles to the conversions of Mahometans.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in this distinguishing article of faith, the Unitarian Christians agree with the Mahometans. And in the remaining articles, which separate them from the pure Church, a yoke is imposed,<sup>4</sup> nearly similar to that which binds the papal church. They are these; excessive and merely oral prayers, fastings, pilgrimages. Whatsoever in Mahometism is excessive and antichristian in respect to these articles, will be found to correspond very nearly with corruptions which prevail in the papal church. External purification, and hypocritical ostentation, supersede in both these religions, the religion of the heart. Ma-

<sup>1</sup> Leslie's Works, fol. vol. i. p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Reflections on Mahometism, printed with Reland's Abridgement.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Priestley, &c.

<sup>4</sup> See note, ch. vi. 5.

hometism, as well as Popery, has its purgatory, and its indulgences to be purchased by money.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, when we consider the origin of Mahometism, and its near affinity to corrupted Christianity; when we reflect also on the amazing extent of this superstitious domination, which occupies nearly as large a portion of the globe as that possessed by Christians; comprising vast regions in ancient Greece and Asia Minor, in Syria, in Persia, in the Indies, in Tartary, in Egypt, and Africa, which once were Christian; we shall readily admit that, if not a Christian heresy, it is at least a Christian apostasy, and well worthy, from its magnitude, to be accounted one horn, or division of empire, of the antichristian beast.

After these observations, it may be useful to exhibit together, in one point of view, these two horns, and to show their mutual agreement with the prophecy.

POPERY	REV. CH. xiii.	MAHOMETISM
is a Christian apostasy; which is ably set forth by Joseph Mede, in his tract on that subject. Works, p. 623.	11. Another wild beast out of the land,	is a Christian apostasy, formed upon the basis of true revelation, and professed by nations which were formerly in the pale of the Christian Church.
is one of the powers into which Antichrist is divided, usurping the place and office of Christ, and pretending to a vicarial power from him, and producing out of its own body mediators and intercessors in opposition to him.	has two horns like a lamb:	is one of the powers into which Antichrist is divided, usurping the redeeming and mediatorial power of Christ, which is partly annihilated under this system, partly transferred to the usurping false prophet.
The doctrine of Popery, though it affect to be Christian, is in many respects "carnal, worldly, devilish;" and its edicts have been enforced by the sword of the civil power, under the direction of the ecclesiastical.	speaks like a dragon:	The doctrine of Mahomet, though it assume an heavenly origin, is not heavenly, but "carnal, worldly, devilish," and has been enforced by the sword.

<sup>1</sup> Sale's Koran, Introduct. Ockley's Hist. of the Saracens, vol. ii. p. 128. Ricaut's Ottoman Empire, 188. Nieburgh's Travels.



## POPERY.

## REV. CH. xiii.

## MAHOMETISM.

The object of Popery has been to acquire secular power, which the Popes have effected to a vast extent, and transmitted to their successors.

12 Exerciseth all the power of the first beast, &c.

Mahomet made use of ecclesiastical influence to obtain secular power, which he combined with it, and transmitted to his successors.

Popery has been promoted by pretended miracles, so that the civil power, exercised by the Popes over kings and their subjects, has been believed to be authorized by divine commission, and has been revered accordingly.

13—14 Doeth great wonders, making fire come down from heaven in the sight of men to cause them to worship the beast:

Mahomet persuaded men that his Koran was a divine law, brought down from heaven miraculously, and thus he gave a religious sanction to his civil power.

The Popes have erected a civil empire of vast extent in Christendom. It is the very image of the ancient Roman tyranny, which persecuted the infant Church; but more formidable, because it is believed to have the sanction of divine appointment. The power in such hands is revered as sacred.

15 Makes an image of the beast, to which he gives life and speech:

Mahomet and his successors have erected a civil empire of great extent like the Roman, a cruel oppressive power, persecuting true religion, and by an apparent sanction from heaven. Their numerous subjects revere their government as sacred.

The intolerance and persecuting spirit of Popery is notorious. The professors of other religions have been murdered by millions. And the Christian world was for ages compelled to receive the mark and name.

16—17 Causes those who refuse worship to the beast to be slain, and prohibits them from buying and selling, unless they have the mark or name of the beast, &c.

The intolerance and persecuting spirit of the Mahometans, by which they have denied, to all but Mussulmans, the common privileges, is well authenticated in history, as are the grievous sufferings of the Christians under their sway.

Such is the agreement between Popery and Mahometism; and so exactly do they both fulfil the prophecy of the second apocalyptic beast. But still, there is a great and remarkable difference between these two apostasies. The Mahometan, though it acknowledge Christ as a prophet, divinely born and commissioned, and as such expects him to return again before the end of the world; seems practically to forget him, and to be as it were lost to his

name; dead to the life which is in Christ. The papal apostasy, though in works it deny Christ, and in many instances has so corrupted his holy religion, that it can scarcely be known as such; yet in name acknowledges him as supreme Lord, and calls itself exclusively the Christian, the Catholic, or universal Church. This difference seems to supply us with the reason, why these two branches of Antichrist, when they come to be treated separately and particularly in the visions of the Apocalypse, are exhibited in a manner so different. The Mahometan branch, having sprung up rapidly into power; having by open force, as well as art, possessed itself suddenly of empire, and continued in the possession of it many ages, apart from the professed Christian Church; so its rise and extension, and all their effects, are represented at once under the sixth trumpet; and are not often noted afterwards, excepting in this its conjunction with the papal horn. But the papal branch required a more particular description. It grew up gradually and covertly; stole silently into power, and without much conflict. To the pure and reformed Church, (which is to win her way to victory ἐκ τοῦ θηρίου, out of the body of the beast in which she is enveloped,) this branch is to be exhibited specially in all its assumed grandeur and artifice; and comfort is to be afforded against its terrors. For this reason, the papal horn is again produced to view, under the symbol of the great harlot, the corrupt Babylon, (ch. xvii.) With this branch of Antichrist, the battles of the pure Church are principally to be fought. As in the Apocalypse, so in the prophecies of Daniel, the blow of the stone strikes this part of the beast; the toes and legs of the image; the Western, the European Roman empire; that blow, which is to break the whole of Anti-

christ to pieces; when the stone itself will become a great mountain, a kingdom of everlasting righteousness, and fill the whole earth, (Dan. vi.)

THE END.

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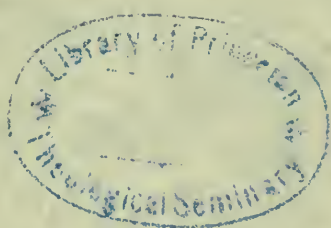
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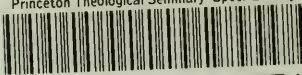
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